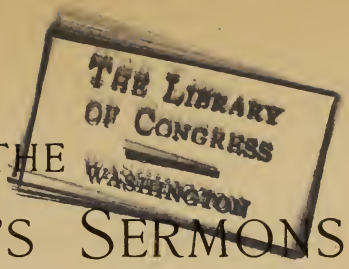
The Chaplain's Sermons

by

John Talbot Smith

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
BX1756
Chap. ..... Copyright No. .....
Shelf. S6C4
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



THE CHAPLAIN'S SERMONS

BY

REV. JOHN TALBOT SMITH, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF

"OUR SEMINARIES, AN ESSAY ON CLERICAL TRAINING," "A WOMAN OF CULTURE," "SOLITARY ISLAND," "HIS HONOR THE MAYOR," AND "SARANAC" :: :: :: :: ::

62274-B21

NEW YORK
WILLIAM H. YOUNG & COMPANY
31 BARCLAY STREET
1896

BX1756
.S6 C4

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Our Seminaries. An Essay on Clerical Training. 330 pages; bound in cloth, . . . $1.00
Library Edition, ... 1.50

Novels at $1.25 Each

A Woman of Culture, ... 355 pages
Solitary Island, ... 432 "
His Honor the Mayor, ... 260 "
Saranac, ... 280 "

AND

A History of the Diocese of Ogdensburgh.
354 pages, ... $1.00
The Prairie Boy. A Story for Boys, . . .75

COPYRIGHT, 1896
BY
JOHN TALBOT SMITH

All rights reserved

Nihil Obstat:
THOS. L. KINKEAD, *Censor.*

Imprimatur:
✝ MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,
Archbishop of New York.

Preface.

The writing of sermons is so far from the line of work usually followed by the author of this volume that he has ventured unwillingly into the field. The failures among sermon-books are notorious. Very few priests seem to have found in them the aid for which they looked, and the sentiment is well-nigh universal that one need not read sermon-books for useful, vivid, fruitful, and instructive models in preaching the gospel. It is possible that the failure of these books lies rather with the users than with the authors. The finest sermons can be no more than suggestive to others beside him who first preached them. Each man has his own way of arranging and presenting a subject, and any other arrangement and presentation seem awkward to him. Too much, therefore, must not be expected of the sermon-writer. If he provides one with a suggestive train of thought, which will stir the imagination, stimulate the reasoning powers, and please the correct taste on a given subject, he has done as much as can be expected from even a genius.

It is the present writer's hope that his sermons may achieve in some degree for inexperienced preachers a success on the above lines. The sermons in this volume have been preached more than once to

congregations representing the average grade of intelligence, and they have now been specially prepared for the young preachers. The writer has avoided the two extremes in sermon-writing: the skeleton sermon, as not providing enough, and the full sermon, as providing too much. Moreover, the full sermon, printed as it was preached, is always the author's; and even with his consent priests do not like to use it as their own: whereas in the present instance, the author having simply given the plan and a brief description of the points, each preacher can build up a new sermon which will be really his own. He will owe no more to the author than the author owes to his models and sources of information. The plan adopted for the arrangement of each sermon is the result of careful experimenting in two matters: aiding the preacher's memory and keeping a congregation interested to the end. The writer is of that numerous class who are unable to write a sermon and commit it to memory, yet have sufficient command of words to talk for an hour on a chosen subject. Such preachers are apt to be long-winded, inaccurate, inelegant in expression, faulty in memory so as to forget their points, and often flurried by these lapses of memory. Keeping in mind these common faults of *extempore* speakers, and also the ever-present need of interesting and pleasing the people, the author adopted the plan of dividing a sermon into three parts, as one divides a play into three acts, and of again dividing each part into two, three, or four points. This plan aids the memory. When parts and points have been selected, a study of them leads the preacher into such an arrange-

ment of them as will increase by natural degrees the interest of listeners up to the close of the sermon. No careful preacher will neglect this study of increasing interest and holding it to the end. It is the one secret of success in preaching, as it is in the writing of plays, novels, essays, orations,—in fact, of every species of literary composition. There must be an ascending climax, which develops fully only at the close, and to which the ascent must be gradual.

It will be noticed that the sermons are not composed on the usual plan of logical sequence and obvious connection among the divisions and points of the subject. The aim has been to present the picturesque rather than the logical and obvious. The average congregation generally is not interested in preachers who only reason deeply and well. In the sermon on St. John the Baptist, for example, the main divisions are concerned with the three periods of his life, and are named Hebron, the Jordan, Machærus, as a picturesque way of presenting the theme: and certainly the people will remember more easily the holy house of Zachary, the wonders done at the Jordan, and the tragedy of Herod's prison, and all that may be said under these heads, than the finest reasoning in the world. In presenting the picturesque, however, it is not intended that sermons shall be mere word-paintings, or pretty confections, more sugar than meat. Little as the average audience cares for exact proof of a dogma, one cannot go too deeply for them in solid instruction, and in the explanation of profound principles; provided that one explains these principles simply and briefly,

and passes at once to rich illustrations of them, taken from the common life of the time. Thus, in the sermon on the Nativity, the least intelligent Catholic audience will thoroughly appreciate the application to ordinary human conditions of the three laws of the religious state, poverty, obedience, and chastity. The writer hopes that this volume may be of use to many of his younger brethren. He has gone out of his usual path simply to be of service to them in that divine office of preaching, which, after the administration of the sacraments, is the highest honor of the Christian priesthood.

New York, October 31.

Contents.

PAGE

Preface, ... iii

The Advent Season, ... 1

Go forth to meet him and say: Tell us if Thou art the One about to reign over Israel.—Brev.

The Precursor, ... 9

And he shall go before Him in the spirit and the power of Elias: that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people. —Luke i. 17.

The Scribes and the Pharisees, ... 18

Ye offspring of vipers, who hath shewed you to flee from the wrath to come?—Luke iii. 7.

Responsibilities of Christians, ... 27

The night is past and the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.—Rom. xiii. 12.

The Immaculate Conception, ... 36

Behold from henceforth all nations shall call me blessed.—Luke i. 48.

Christmas Day, ... 44

For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger.—Luke ii. 11, 12.

PAGE

New Year's Day, ... 53

When a man hath done then shall he begin.—Ecclus. xviii. 6.

The Epiphany, ... 61

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. —John i. 11.

St. Patrick, ... 69

Behold a great priest, who in his days was pleasing to God, and was found just, and in the time of wrath was made a reconciliation.—Brev.

St. Joseph, ... 77

A holy death makes others divine after death, and glory embraces those who have earned the palm: but thou, more blessed in thy wonderful destiny, while yet a mortal, equalled the celestials in the full enjoyment of God.—Breviary hymn.

The Lenten Season, ... 86

What wilt thou that I do to thee? And he said, Lord, that I may see.—Luke xvii. 41.

Death, ... 95

It is appointed unto men once to die.—Heb. ix. 27.

By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death.—Rom. v. 12.

The Final Account, ... 104

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.—Matt. xii. 36.

Heaven, ... 112

But as it is written: the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.— 1 Cor. ii. 9.

PAGE

Everlasting Failure, ... 121

Then shall He say to the wicked: depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire.—Matt. xxv. 46.

The Passion of Christ, ... 129

And Jesus again crying with a loud voice yielded up His Spirit.—Matt. xxvii. 59.

Faith, ... 137

Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed. —John xx. 29.

I have kept the faith.—2 Tim. iv. 7.

But the just shall live in his faith.—Hab. xi. 4.

The Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ, . . 146

Furthermore I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ.—Phil. iii. 8.

The Sacraments, ... 155

Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars.—Prov. ix. 1.

I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.—Apoc. i. 12, 13.

Sin, ... 164

Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.— James i. 15.

For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. vi. 23.

PAGE

Penance, ... 173

Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish.—Luke xiii. 3.

Holy Thursday, ... 181

And whilst they were eating, Jesus took bread: and blessing broke, and gave to them, and said: Take ye and eat, This is My Body.—Mark xiv. 22.

What is Wrong with the Men, ... 189

Now there was much grass in the place: the men therefore sat down in number about five thousand.—John vi. 10.

But while the men were sleeping his enemy came, sowed cockle amid the wheat, and went his way.—Matt. xiii. 25.

The Christian Family, ... 197

And He went down with them and came to Nazareth: and He was subject to them. And His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men. Luke ii. 51, 52.

Prayer, ... 205

And He spoke a parable to them, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.—Luke xviii. 1.

Priestcraft, ... 213

The Lord hath sworn and He will not repent: thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. —Psalm cix.

The Four Last Things, ... 222

In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin. —Ecclus. vii. 40.

PAGE

The Holy Name of Jesus, ... 230

Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.—Matt. i. 21.

The Married State, ... 238

A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.—Gen. ii. 24.

This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church.—Ephes. v. 32.

The Child, ... 246

Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.—Mark x. 14.

Easter Sunday, ... 254

He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. —1 Cor. xv. 4.

Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him.—Rom. vi. 9.

The Ascension of the King, ... 262

And when He had said these things, whilst they looked on, He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.—Acts i. 9.

The Feast of Pentecost, ... 270

But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.—John xvi. 26.

The Blessed Trinity, ... 278

Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

PAGE

For there are three who give testimony in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one.—1 John v. 7.

Corpus Christi, ... 286

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.—John vi. 55, 56.

The Assumption, ... 294

A great sign appeared in heaven: a Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.—Apoc. xii. 1.

The Angels, ... 303

Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him. —Dan. vii. 10.

It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—Luke xvi. 22.

The Feast of All Saints, ... 311

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.—Apoc. vii. 9.

The Souls in Purgatory, ... 318

Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice.—Ps. cxxix.

It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins. —1 Mac. xii. 46.

PAGE

The Saints, ... 326

To him that shall overcome I shall give to sit with Me in my throne: as I also have overcome, and am sat down with My Father in his throne.—Apoc. iii. 21.

They are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.—Luke xx. 36.

Index of Subjects, ... 339

Index for Sundays of the year, ... 339

Index for Special Courses, ... 340

The Advent Season.

Go forth to meet Him and say: Tell us if Thou art the One about to reign over Israel.—Brev.

OUTLINE.

1. The Church begins her New Year in Advent without festivities.
2. Her majestic voice carries to all men the message of the coming King.
3. She alone announces with power the virginal birth of Jesus.
4. The grandeur of both message and messenger forces men to listen with profound emotion.
5. Many deny importance to either message or messenger, and their arguments are answered.
6. Men will hear the truth, and cannot refuse it either open or secret homage.
7. The Church exhausts her energies in presenting to men at particular times the great truths of religion.
8. By emphasizing in the Advent season the first coming of the Son of God, she hopes to prepare men for His second and more solemn coming.
9. Therefore her glorious voice wakes all men from the sleep of sin and indifference to watch in repentance and hope at the crib of Bethlehem.

I. The Call to the People.

1. As the civil year begins with the month of January, so the Church year begins with the season of Advent. There is perhaps more of accident than of design in the selection of one month over another for the first place in the calendar; whereas the idea of spiritual preparation for the Nativity of Christ directs the Church in fixing the opening day for the ecclesiastical year. Her new year's day is strangely lacking in the appearances of a festival. The churches are draped in the penitential color, and the *Gloria* is dropped from the hymns of praise; the liturgy of the time is a mingled cry of joy and sorrow; and the

lessons of the daily office describe the joyous coming of a great leader together with the fearful sufferings of a man, despised and rejected, who "came unto his own, and his own received him not." So used are we to the celebration of this Advent season, that its beautiful significance escapes our feeble vision. What we are doing to-day in honor of Christ's coming, the millions of Catholics scattered over the globe are doing in precisely the same way, and with the same spirit. What a tremendous spectacle it would be to the eye which could take in the scene, as does the mind, at one glance; these millions of people and leaders crying out one to another and to the world, "Brethren, it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."—Rom. xiii.

2. This is the cry of the great Church of Christ, and her colors are penitential, because with her great graces are met by preparatory penances; heaven is the reward of a life of restraint and obedience; the crown is preceded by sickness, death, judgment, purgatory; the honor of numbering God among this mortal race is acknowledged in garments of penance, with tears of joy and sorrow. She begins her year in penance that she may end it in glory. Thus clad she stands before the nations, both the heedful and the indifferent, and calls them to the road of preparation, the way of the kings to Bethlehem. What an inspiration to the dullest to behold her majestic figure standing before the world of to-day, and crying out her invitation and her warning, as did the prophets to the ancient world, as did the Angel to Mary and Joseph and the Shepherds, as did John the Baptist

to the Scribes and Pharisees. Her glorious voice touches the remotest isles, searches the depths of the seas, reaches into the abysses of human hearts; it breaks across the hum of unprincipled trade, drowns the clamors of earthly passions, silences the speech of unbelief a moment, so that all mankind hears and acknowledges the message of the herald: Hasten to adore the coming King.

3. Alas, that she should stand so utterly alone at this hour, that among the descendants of Christians she must find millions who listen with indifference and ignorance, instead of love. "The ox hath known his owner, and the ass his master's stall; but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood."—Isa. i. 3. Alone she announces that a God is about to honor the race by the assumption of mortality, which then becomes Divine. The sects have no Advent, no preparation worthy of the name. A few struggle to imitate her methods, but the millions born in their fold look on without care, or take no part. There is neither beginning nor end to the sect year, for it does not exist. They teach the Christ, but are not sure of His miraculous birth, of His divinity, of His promised kingdom, of His resurrection, nay, of His sanity. They spend an Advent in discussing these doubts. The great Church alone cries out with a voice as certain as the prophet's when he spoke to Achaz: "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel."—Isa. vii.

II. The Listening World.

1. The world listens to this cry with respect, or scorn, or curiosity. It *must* listen. Thousands of priests to-day announce from the altars the name and character of the coming King. Two hundred millions of souls shout back their joy at the tidings. Both priests and people gather in prayer and penance to make ready for the Christmas festival, and the indifferent millions cannot but ask the meaning of all this clamor of petition and preparation. The interested æsthetic is charmed with the ritual of these days, with the reading of the prophecies of Isaias, with the beauty of the antiphons in the holy offices. The atheist bemoans the vitality of the Christian "superstition." The indifferent Catholic is touched at this reminder of his own neglect, and the ignorant but innocent pagan is drawn by a mysterious sympathy toward the truth so beautifully announced. Thus each year by example and teaching the world is made aware of the God who rules the world; and, the message delivered, each man must justify to himself the manner in which he receives it. Men will not be able to say at judgment that the truth was not announced to them.

2. Many deny that it is the truth, and refuse to accept the splendor of the announcement as a witness to the Divinity of Christ or of Christianity. They point out the millions that profess Buddhism, and ask if a similar cry or call to worship its divinities should be the more heeded because so many believe in them. They forget that it is not the numbers which

follow Christ that make Him the Son of God; nor is it the success of the Christian idea which makes it the truth. Its vitality is from God, from truth itself. What a terror shook the court of Herod when the Kings of the East in their innocence came asking for the King of the Jews! What joy filled the hearts of the weary people, sad with waiting and expectation. It was not numbers that drew from Simeon his prophetic utterances in the temple, frightening once more the corrupt court, but a helpless child of humble parents. When John scorned the Pharisees and announced the Christ, when Jesus called Himself the Son of God, drove the vile from the temple with lashing, and openly rebuked both Herod and the Pharisees, there were no numbers to impress men. Neither was there a multitude in Rome when the emperors began their struggle with the Popes of the catacombs, and learned that in their dominion was a power which did not depend on the strength of this world. Finally there were no numbers in this very country of ours, when the first Catholic immigrants began to celebrate the neglected Christmas festival. It was both scorned and neglected in those days, though to-day most popular of the feasts of the year.

3. Men must listen to the truth, because they were made to know and love it, almost as soon as presented to them. It was truth which drew the Kings, frightened Herod and the Pharisees, made the Popes powerful, and rescued the feast of Christmas from oblivion in this country. To-day, as when first the Prophets cried out to the world, as when Christ preached, and afterward the Apostles, men hear the same message: the Son of God is come into this

world to save mankind. Then follow all the truths dependent on this message: the Blessed Trinity and the eternal life of heaven; the conditions of salvation, and the conditions of damnation; the fact and the sense or conviction of sin; its judgment; repentance here, and restoration in the life to come; and the responsibilities which spring from these. These things are tremendous truths or still more tremendous falsehoods. They must be accepted or destroyed. They are the basis of the teaching of Christ, and have brought consolation and strength and happiness to hundreds of millions. Once more in this season of Advent the Church announces them to men.

III. The Last Coming.

1. Not alone in her churches, pulpits, offices does the Church make the announcement of the King's coming and the need of preparation; but also by that impulse which, through the Holy Spirit, she gives to all the faithful. Convinced of this truth, each Catholic passes the message to his neighbor, his friend, his acquaintance, and the whole world trembles with joy or with uneasiness. The Protestant Christian wonders at the persistency which makes of this Advent an annual affair, an universal festival involving the whole world, and immense activity. Would not a mere notice from the pulpit be sufficient when the anniversary came around, or a paragraph in the journal? Man is not constituted to be deeply impressing by such routine methods. Some of his impressions must be received daily and even hourly, and at the least one year's round must

bring him face to face with important anniversaries. Nature has so ordained it. The processes of vegetation repeat themselves in the annual round of the seasons; at fixed times the constellations begin anew their wondrous course through space; and so in the mental, social, and spiritual orders man is necessitated to renew his affirmation for the things that are. Each year a new generation arises and must be taught the same truths, with ever-freshening emphasis and illustration; for they, no less than their begetters, have souls to save.

2. Still, queries the economist, what need of such a display of earnestness, such a waste of force? The Church seems to exhaust mankind in the effort to prepare them for a mere anniversary. No: it is not only the mere anniversary for which the Church prepares. The first coming of Christ is a thing of the past; the second coming of the Son of God is the motive for so great persistency and earnestness. The crib will one day yield to the throne of judgment, and before this Child, now helpless and free to the love or hate or indifference of men, the nations of time must pass for the last sentence. What a contrast, these two comings of Christ! In Bethlehem, and on the anniversaries, a little Child ready to receive any that believe in Him, or that long for faith and certainty; helpless before ill-treatment, eager only to bestow the gift of life. On the throne a just Judge, who must render to every man according to his works, who comes in the clouds of heaven with exceeding power and majesty, and who will divide all men into two multitudes, one for the life of heaven and the other for the life of hell. Can the sum of

human earnestness and persistency be too great to waste upon the training of men for the supreme moment of destiny?

3. Therefore, awake, mankind, and set out to find the King with earnest hearts and loving intentions. The sleep which has dulled you into indifference to the things of eternal life is often too profound for the power of God to disturb, and thousands have waked from it only at the bar of judgment. They now have an eternity in which to consider its fatal strength. What an enchanter's sleep money-getting, pleasures of sense, love of ease, petted passions, cast upon the soul. In vain the priest, the friend, the scourges of God shout in the sleeper's ear, and rain blows on the slumberer! By the million men deliver themselves with joy and speed to the sleep of sin, and would have it so deep that no power could waken them even to immortality. Let the prophet, the angel, the ruler, the church cease for one year to cry out to men, and this fatal sleep will have claimed other millions. Therefore for twenty centuries has the church stood in the market-place, and announced the King; alone, ridiculed, and persecuted; but with a voice so persuasive and piercing that only the wilfully deaf fail to hear. And to-day salvation is much nearer to the universal world than at any time since the Christ.

The Precursor.

And he shall go before Him in the spirit and the power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people.—Luke i. 17.

OUTLINE.

1. The Precursor held the high office of preparing the Jews for the immediate coming of the Christ.
2. The splendid circumstances attending his birth.
3. His companionship with Jesus in boyhood.
4. His weird and solemn appearance preaching on the banks of the Jordan.
5. The substance of his powerful teachings.
6. His meeting with Christ marks the turning-point of his career.
7. The earthly reward of his labors is the splendid testimony of Christ.
8. The world rewards his devotion by imprisonment and death.
9. As John spoke of Christ to the world in his day, so in our day the Church preaches the Messiah to all men.

I. Hebron.

1. God prepared the old world for the coming of His Son by the prophets, the actors in the opening scenes of the Saviour's life by the Angel Gabriel, as he prepares each year the Christian world by the solemn celebrations of the Church. The day in which Christ lived was enlightened as to the character of Christ by the power and genius of John the Baptist. He burst upon the Jewish nation like a meteor, and the whole race went out to meet him. The loftiness and sweetness of his wonderful nature are somewhat obscured for us by his closeness to the light of the world, Christ Himself; just as the won-

derful holiness of Mary and Joseph fade before the splendor of the Divinity. These exalted souls certainly rejoiced in their obscurity, which for them meant light beyond what earthly fame could ever give them. Yet with all their effacement it is through them our human wits get some understanding of the glorious nature of Jesus; and the more we dwell upon their careers and endowments the more humbly and lovingly do we adore the Divine Man. The resemblance in many points of the Saviour and His Precursor stirs the heart to deep emotion.

2. His entrance into the world is the noblest known to man, and its sublime circumstances as related by St. Luke touch even the dry hearts of pagans. The Angel announced him in the very temple of God to the father serving incense at the altar in terms which suit only the princes of men, the leaders whom genius and lofty character have endowed with the purple; the Holy Family sanctified him in his mother's womb, in the great mystery of the Visitation; at that moment the Precursor recognized His Master, and in the recognition was freed from the touch of original sin; and the two mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, lifted up with the enthusiasm of the Holy Spirit, uttered the prayers and the canticle which have echoed through the world for so many centuries. The Angel's salute to Mary was completed by Elizabeth, and the beautiful *Magnificat* leaped from the heart and lips of the Mother of Jesus. The Baptist was welcomed into the world by the Holy Family, and received his holy name in their presence; and his father sang to God that other canticle, the *Benedictus*, whose beauty has given it enduring life in the Church.

No poet of loftiest genius could have imagined and described a scene more sublime than the entrance of John into the world.

3. Although we have no knowledge of the youth of John other than the statement of his life in the desert, all tradition assures us that the families of Joseph and Zachary enjoyed intimacy for many years before death had removed the parents of John, and the Spirit had sent him into solitude to prepare for his mission. Therefore, we see in so many paintings the little Precursor as the companion and playfellow of Christ. We have only to look at the holy children around us, the children whom God has specially marked for His own, and set in such homes as these once ruled by Joseph and Zachary, by Mary and Elizabeth, to get an understanding of what that comradeship must have been. The angels rejoiced in it. It was human no less than divine. No sorrows peculiar to this world were spared its immortal actors. Exile and the dread of a King's jealousy kept Joseph in obscure Galilee and away from his own; then death called the priest of Hebron and his wife to their rest; and finally the desert beckoned to John and received him into its solitude. It requires no fancy to see the smiles which lit the faces of the two boys at each meeting, and the tears which graced each parting; to hear the comforting words of Jesus whispered into the ear of John over the graves of his beloved parents; and, when the final parting came, and the holy boy withdrew from the society of men, when the family of Hebron was no more on this earth, and the tears of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph mingled with John's at the loss of so much loveliness, to hear the mingled bless-

ings of Son and Mother and Patriarch showered upon the loveliest boy that the earth ever nourished after the Boy of Galilee. They might have remained together, but their first thought and desire was the will of God.

II. The Jordan.

1. They met again only when the Holy Ghost had ended the period of preparation for John, who suddenly appeared in the desert near Jerusalem to announce the Messiah and to "prepare a perfect people to the Lord." As innocent and holy as when he came from the womb of his mother, illumined by that long and lonely life in the desert with God, filled with one desire to render his people fit for the Messiah, he stood up before the world of that time and called it to penance. He was clad in skins, he ate no meat and drank no wine, and his words so touched the hearts of those who heard them that the report spread through all the country of a new prophet sent by God to His people. The Jews had been long without a prophet, but so deeply had they longed for one, and particularly for the last and greatest, the Messiah, that the marks of the true prophet were familiar to the commonest. John went not near the city, but did his work in the wilderness; and the sincere, the curious, the hopeful went out to meet him, hoping in those sad times for a message that meant help from heaven for a very sick world. They were more than satisfied, for this strange, weird, awful character who preached the necessity of penance, announced himself as the herald of One still greater than himself, whose coming would bring eternal joy to the world.

2. He cried out penance to listeners for whom penance was a lost art; and he put his finger on the weak spot of Judaism at that time, when he warned the Pharisees and Sadducees that their descent from Abraham was not enough to save them from the wrath to come. These aristocrats promptly denounced him, but the multitude did not desert him in consequence; they still crowded to the Jordan, wept for their sins, and were baptized in the river as a sign of their regenerated hearts. They asked repeatedly what they were to do. To some the Precursor answered, "He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do in like manner." To the tax-collectors, he said: "Do nothing more than that which is appointed you;" to soldiers: "Do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man, and be content with your pay." And to all he declared that he was not Elias, nor the Messiah, nor anything more than a mere voice sent by God to prepare men for the One who was to baptize men with the Holy Ghost and with fire. The life of the desert under the influence of the Holy Spirit had emancipated John from the slavery to tradition and formalism in which lived the Scribes and the Pharisees; he saw the condition of society with the clear eyes of the prophet and hermit; and, therefore, he did not hesitate to denounce the powerful and hard-hearted rulers of the time in vigorous language, calling the Pharisees a set of vipers, and publicly reproaching Herod for his crimes. To them also he announced a Messiah, whose axe was at the root; but while for the repentant His coming was to bring joy and hope, for such as these the Christ would have only unquenchable fire.

3. His wonderful career may be said to have culminated with the baptism of Christ. The leaders of the people had rejected him, and the court was scheming to put him out of the way without starting a riot; from one end of the land to the other had gone the report of his character and his teaching; and while men were talking in wonder and joy of the Great Being foretold by him as soon to come to man's relief, Jesus appeared on the Jordan and presented Himself like a sinner for baptism. We can well pause in astonishment at this mystery; we can sympathize with the Precursor as he said: "I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" and we can understand in a measure the comfort of the Saviour's reply: "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice. Then he suffered Him." It was the Master's testimony to the work of His servant; the Holy Ghost confirmed that testimony by manifesting Himself to the Precursor as He descended on Jesus in the form of a dove; and the Father's voice sounded in the ears of John in acknowledgment of His beloved Son. The Baptist knew that his work was ended, that the voice which had stirred all Judea was to sound no more the glories of the Messiah, that his light was eclipsed; and we feel the pathos of his words to his disciples: "He must increase, but I must decrease." For a little while he preached to the multitudes; then the prison of Herod closed upon him forever.

III. Machaerus.

1. The reward of his labors for the world was a prison, in which the hatred of a harlot kept him locked, with the fourth part of a king as his jailer. As his life had been pure, disinterested, severe, his mind lofty, his soul seraphic, so his persecutors, his enemies, his prison were among the meanest on the earth. What place they have kept in history is due to their mighty victim; but it is a mean and infamous place, in which their crime and their stupidity are pilloried together. Though John made glorious the fortress in whose dungeons his life ended, none the less bitter were those last days for him. We can see him in his lonely cell, overcome, as man cannot help but be, with sweet memories of the past and the terrors of the future. The days of his childhood, the sweet home at Hebron, the glorious freedom of the desert, the days of his mission, rise before him side by side with the meanness of Herod, the hatred of Herodias, the hardships of the prison, the momentary expectation of a violent death. Angels may have comforted him, have strengthened him; but the human heart still suffers from its own weaknesses, and the son of Zachary and Elizabeth suffered, as his Master suffered, all the natural pains of his situation. One voice of comfort broke into the gloom and sadness of the prison. "What went you out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see?

A prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written: Behold I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee. Amen I say to you, among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."—Matt. xxi.

2. Yet a shameless dancer cut short his life, and the head of the Precursor was struck off at the bidding of Herod. So the beast Nero treated St. Paul, and a later beast, Henry VIII., pleased himself with the heads of More and Fisher. The crowned meanness and vileness of this world often fattens on the blood of the really great. The Precursor died as his Master was to die, a criminal, having denounced the sins of the rulers; after a life too brief for so much loveliness of heart and power of soul; loved indeed by the people, but scorned by the rulers, who declared him possessed of the devil. In all things he was truly the Precursor of Christ, and to study his spirit, the externals of his character, and his career, is to get a deeper glimpse into the soul of Jesus.

3. It is the fashion with many to look upon the age in which he lived as peculiarly blessed because of his presence; and the multitudes who followed him as very fortunate in having so great an impulse to good, so great an encouragement to keep in the way of virtue. It is also a fashion to wonder at the folly and blindness of the Jewish leaders, who could listen and watch at his feet, and return home with the belief that the Precursor possessed a devil. We are all ready to denounce the malice and wickedness which handed him over to a painful imprisonment and an ignoble death. Yet in what are our days different from the

days of the Baptist? Where the world had only one Judea we have a Judea in every church that honors the land; where the world had only one John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord we have the splendid universal Church, making the world ring with her joyous announcement of the King; and while at that time both the Precursor and his Master were confined to a small corner of the world, to-day the Son of God is on every altar, and Jesus finds His Precursor in every faithful priest, in every devout Christian. We wonder at the folly of the Pharisees! Look around! See the multitude pursuing pleasure, and the means of pleasure, with the gospel trumpeted in their ears as it never was in the days of the Baptist; thousands of leaders, millions of Christians, the telegraph and the press, the churches, systems of charity, a thousand important facts clamoring in the public places of the life to come, of the days of Advent, of the King, of sin and its judgment. Yet the multitude turns as did the Jewish leaders to curse the herald of such tidings. It prefers to worship the devil; where it can persecute it does not hesitate to use the rack, the dungeon, and the scaffold. It is the same fool-world as in the days of St. John; and since it cannot get at the Christ or the Precursor, it turns like a tiger on their followers to rend them.

The Scribes and the Pharisees.

Ye offspring of vipers, who hath shewed you to flee from the wrath to come.—Luke iii. 7.

OUTLINE.

1. God prepared the Jews with great care for the coming of His Son.
2. Yet the Jewish leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, though intelligent, wealthy, and witnesses of many marvels,
3. Rejected and slew both the Precursor and Our Lord,
4. Chiefly because they allowed their deep-rooted prejudices and habits of sin to blind their judgment.
5. Their prejudices rejected a carpenter as the Messiah.
6. Habits of sin led them into the guilt of Deicide.
7. Their punishment was the destruction of their order and their city.
8. They have successors at the present time in all poor Catholics.

I. The Brood of Vipers.

1. The ingratitude which man so often displays toward God as well as toward his fellows never was better illustrated than in the history of the powerful classes known as the Scribes and the Pharisees. God the Father prepared the Jews with wonderful care for the coming of that ruler, whose kingdom was to be the hearts of men, and through whom the chosen people were to rule the world. The Prophets announced the Messiah, the Angel Gabriel carried various messages to Zachary, to the Blessed Mother, to St. Joseph, and to the shepherds, which prepared them for the Saviour's coming, and the Kings aroused Jerusalem to the immediate fulfilment of the long-studied prophecies; while Jesus, by His wonderful

miracles, and John the Baptist, by his express declarations, made clear to the highest and lowest of the Jews that the Messiah had really come among men. Never in the history of the world was a nation or its leaders more carefully and precisely prepared for its particular destiny than the Jewish nation for its mission of enlightenment to the world.

2. Yet observe the fearful malice which actuated the leaders of the Jewish nation in all their dealings with the Saviour. Bear in mind that the Scribes and the Pharisees were the wealthy, educated, intelligent, and powerful classes of Judea; all power was practically in their hands; and while the common people might through ignorance mistake an impostor for the Messiah, the intelligence and training of the Scribes and the Pharisees were of so high an order, that mistakes of that kind, failure to recognize the Messiah as soon as He presented His claims, should have been next to impossible. As a matter of fact when the Kings from the East made inquiry as to the newborn King of the Jews, these well-trained and expert leaders promptly named His birthplace, and the royal house from which He was to spring. When John the Baptist came out of the desert and began his work of preparation for his Master, these same Scribes and Pharisees sent delegates to interview him, that they might know if he were the Messiah, or a prophet, or a messenger of God; so alert were they for the coming of that leader who was to bring them out of bondage and give them a place once more among the nations. When Christ began His wonderful career, their agents and spies missed no possible opportunity of watching Him. Their best men argued with

Him, their princes sought to entertain Him. His greatest miracles were witnessed by many of them, and the first converts came from their ranks. They heard the Saviour's claims to the position of Son of God, as the Messiah, they saw His raising of Lazarus from the dead, they felt the charm and power of His magnificent teachings, they felt bitterly His great influence over the people, an influence never attained by them. The more they sought to discover the secret of His powers the more were they convinced that this wonderful Being came from God.

3. But alas! to what horrors did not their evil dispositions lead them in spite of their careful training, their intelligence, the open declarations of the Baptist and the miracles of Jesus, their own convictions and tremblings, the reports of their numerous spies. They came to the conclusion that John was possessed of the devil, that his testimony was diabolical, his doctrines vain, and himself an impostor. They had no defence for him, no criticism of Herod, when first the prison and then the grave closed upon the Precursor. Rather they rejoiced that he had been made away with in his youth, before he had had time to injure them, whom he had called to their very faces a brood of vipers. They set on foot plans for the murder of the Saviour, as a still more dangerous man among the people. His miracles did not convince, but only maddened them. His greatness irritated them, because the assassin might not strike at Him in the daylight or in the public place. That beautiful life had to be sought in the darkness, or destroyed through the Roman tribunals. They gnashed their teeth at Him, and cursed the fortunates whose phys-

ical woes had been healed by the word or the touch of the Son of God. They left no stone unturned to compass His final destruction. When we compare the lavish generosity of God the Father in His treatment of the Jews with the malice of the leaders in the time of Christ, it is easy to understand the exceeding patience of God with weak and malicious mankind.

II. Their Sins.

1. Why should they have been so blind, so malicious, so murderous? What was the secret of a stupidity so marvellous that even the pagan world wonders at it to-day? Even had they not accepted Christ as the Messiah, He might have been granted the honors and privileges of a great teacher, a genius whose doctrines could not but bring good to mankind; or He might have been pleasantly banished to remote countries, with orders to be seen no more in Judea. The Scribes and Pharisees might at least have spared their name the guilt of innocent blood. But this prudence was not within their power. Deep-rooted prejudices and long enjoyment of the first places in the state made decency impossible. For generations they had looked for this leader, the Messiah, and had pictured Him as coming like a prince of this world to take possession of His own. Statesmen were to stand at His mother's bedside to welcome Him into existence; a nation was to wait at His palace gates to greet Him; He was to grow up under the care of kings, and to go forth in His maturity a general of renown, a sage, a politician, surrounded by the Scribes and Pharisees, and other leading classes in

the state, who were to conquer the world under His banner, and to possess all the good things of spoiled kingdoms. And they were now asked to give up this brilliant dream for the reality of a carpenter of Nazareth, a mere teacher in the synagogue, a wandering and perhaps crazy philosopher, who had never seen an army, or handled a sword, and who despised the Pharisees! It was absurd, madness itself! A carpenter in place of a prince; a preacher instead of a warrior; an obscure Galilean in place of a scion of David! The Scribes and the Pharisees laughed the idea to scorn.

2. But even had they accepted Him, He would not accept them in their pride and sin. As their prejudices hindered them from seeing the Messiah in the carpenter, so their sins, their worldliness, their love of the first places, their cruelty to the poor, their corruption, made them hateful to the Son of God. Merciful as He was to penitent sinners, He had no pity for such hypocrites. They were made to understand from the beginning of their relations with Him that repentant publicans, weeping Magdalens, apostolic Levis, fishermen like Peter, were more acceptable to Him than the whited sepulchres seated in high places. The corruption and the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders must have been extraordinary at this period. While they went about praying long prayers at the street-corners, and in the market-place; or in time of fasting carried pallid and emaciated faces before the people; or displayed the most rigid exactness in carrying out the details of the Mosaic ritual; at the same time their greed for public position was notorious, their injustices against the

poor were public talk, and their secret corruption was as marked as their outward elegance. Their domineering and ugly insolence had long made them hated of the people, who listened with joy to the denunciations heaped upon them by the Precursor and Christ. They hated Christ because He would not be a party to their foulness, would not secure them in their high places, would not sanction their iniquities, and threatened to remove them from the seats they so unworthily filled. They were mere worldlings, who sought a Messiah that would minister to their passions and secure their private interests.

3. They deserved and received the scorn of Christ. One shudders at the tremendous denunciations hurled at these faithless leaders in the presence of the people whom they were supposed to control, denunciations which they had to accept in silence and to rave over in the secrecy of their councils against the Messiah. As they never approached Him unless with the purpose of humiliating and entrapping Him, so He never received them but with coldness, or open scorn, or withering denunciation. "O generation of vipers, how can you speak good things, whereas you are evil?" is his saying in Matt. xii. Another time He quotes Isaias against them: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." To His disciples He said of them: "They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit." When the children cried out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and the indignant Pharisees asked why He did not rebuke them, He replied with perfect scorn: "Yea, have you not read, Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings,

thou hast perfect praise?" That they might know He was informed of their plottings against His sacred life, He described for them the parable of the man who owned a vineyard, and placed his workmen in it; but these were vicious ingrates, who longed to seize the vineyard for their own; and they killed their employer's agents one after another, until he sent his own son to reason with them, sure that they would reverence him. But they killed the son also in the hope of securing the vineyard for their own. "And when the chief priests and the Pharisees had heard his parables, they knew that he spoke of them." —Matt. xxi. But all His utterances against them were summed up in the declaration: "Amen I say to you that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you;" and in that terrific outburst contained in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees." Read the list of His epithets against them: hypocrites, blind guides, foolish, full of rapine and uncleanness, whited sepulchres, full of hypocrisy and iniquity, serpents, generation of vipers, robbers of the widow, and children of hell. Thus described have they gone down to all the generations of men.

III. Their Punishment.

1. So thoroughly had they exhausted the patience of the Father and Son, so desperately had they cut down every movement of grace in their own hearts, so bitterly had they clung to evil in the face of the wonders worked among them, that Christ

foretold their punishment long before they had hurried Him to violent death. "Behold, your house shall be left to you, desolate."—Matt. xxiii. "Amen I say to you, there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone that shall not be destroyed."—Matt. xxiv. His prophecies were fulfilled to the letter. Many a Scribe and Pharisee who stood and mocked beneath the cross of Calvary lived to see the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, and the wiping out of the two classes who had done so much to spill the precious blood of John, and had compassed the cruel death of the Son of God. Jerusalem has come to life again, but the temple and the Scribes and the Pharisees are seen no more. The memory of that majestic structure is revered by all men; the memory of the Scribes and Pharisees is held in execration. The Jews still wander over the earth, but their leaders have no longer place in the councils of men. Christ has written their shameful place in history.

2. The sin of the Pharisee is hypocrisy first; and second it is the abuse of great graces. What about the Pharisees of the present moment? Have we none amongst us? Behold this Catholic sitting in the high places of the world, giving generously to all public charities, who avoids the sacraments, and derives his immense income from direct oppression of the poor, through miserable wages and long hours of labor, through dishonest combinations with other merchants to control market prices. Regard this intelligent pagan, well educated, well situated, who for a lifetime has witnessed the marvels wrought in the world by the religion of Christ, and yet has never dared to

sacrifice pleasure to truth and follow the Christ. Here is a man who makes with tremendous reverence the sign of the cross, and does not hesitate to leave his wife and children in necessity, while he spends his wages in drink. The world is full of Scribes and Pharisees at this moment, and a good number of them can be found among Catholics. They are as detestable as their ancient forerunners. The denunciations of Christ apply to them, and the punishment of the Pharisees hangs over them. Let them not be deceived. Their house shall finally be left to them, desolate. The gospel of Christ has been preached to the civilized world, and its graces have been poured out upon the nations far more thoroughly even than in the days of the Saviour. If the Scribes and the Pharisees were condemned in time and eternity for rejecting the Precursor and the Saviour, how shall the modern world, so familiar with Christianity, escape hell for its indifference to Christ?

Responsibilities of Christians.

The night is past and the day is at hand; let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.—Rom. xiii. 12.

OUTLINE.

1. Whoever has heard the gospel of truth thereby assumes a certain responsibility.
2. The message and witness of the Church impose on men a certain responsibility.
3. To get rid of it men persecute and deny the Church, as the ancient world slew the Prophets, the Precursor, and finally the Christ.
4. The responsibilities of Christians and how they are to be carried are learned from various illustrious examples.
5. The special graces poured upon individual Catholics make their responsibility heavy.
6. Our responsibility to ourselves, our neighbors, and our God.

I. Grace and its Rejection.

1. The old world had faith and hope kept alive in it by the nation of the Jews, taught and inspired by the holy prophets to look for the coming of Christ, to announce Him to the world, and so to strengthen the tradition among the Gentiles that a great leader would one day deliver the world from its sorrows. The angels, the Magi, and the doctors of the law bore testimony in various ways to the birth of Christ when that event occurred. John the Baptist and the wondrous miracles of Jesus both testified to the Jews that the Messiah had at last come into the world. For the nation of the Jews, and for all the strangers who had heard prophets or angels, Magi or the Bap-

tist, who had seen the miracles of Christ, or had in any way distinctly learned of faith in Christ, there at once arose an obligation to respond in some way to the grace granted to them. Since God had chosen them for witnesses to His manifestations, both grace and reason urged them to accept and use His gifts; and when they failed to do so of their own fault, they incurred a guilt similar to that which brought such woe on Bethsaida and Corozain. "For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you."—Luke x.

2. From the ascension of Christ the Church which He founded has been in every age the well-known witness to His life and mission, and has made known to the world by every means in her power the destiny of men under Christ. This testimony of the Church, so freely given to the civilized and the barbarous world, imposes on men the responsibility of acknowledging it as God intended. Catholics are more specially bound to this acknowledgment, since each moment of their lives has been directly blessed and sustained by Christ, that they may bear constant witness to the truth. Their responsibility is the heaviest of all. If the savage who has just heard of the Blessed Trinity, eternal life, and the danger of its loss, and in whose soul a ray of light has descended to urge him to accept what he has heard, be bound to respond to the particular grace offered him, how much more is the Christian bound to respond to all graces, who has been so carefully and lovingly tended

by Christ from his conception to his grave. This responsibility cannot be shirked. If for every idle word that men shall speak, they must render account of it in the day of judgment, surely the graces placed at their disposal must also be accounted for, as the money placed at the disposal of a servant by his master must be returned with interest. Here are Our Lord's own words to the foolish servant: "Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury."—Matt. xxv.

3. Alas, how easily we free ourselves from the heavy responsibility imposed upon us. The Jews put many of their prophets to death, the court of Herod laughed at the mission of the Magi, Herod slew the Innocents to reach the Christ, John the Baptist was accused of having a devil, was imprisoned, and ignominously put to death, and Christ Himself, after a life so beautiful that only the depraved could have rejected it, was crucified. The history of the Church has been a history of persecution, now in one form, again in another. The arena to-day, Bismarck to-morrow, Freemasonry the third day! But always persecution! Because men are so bent on ignoble and unlawful pleasures, they will not hear of responsibilities that interfere with their pleasant sins; and they are willing and even eager to slay, or imprison, or banish the witness to the truth, who stands in the market-place crying out to all men their destiny and the demands it makes upon them. And bear in mind that it is not alone the stranger who is guilty of this persecution. How many an unfortunate Catholic has raised hand and voice against the truth, either by

stifling conscience within himself, or by direct attack, or by bad example, or by cultivating wilful ignorance of the obligations of faith. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."—John i.

II. Nature of our Responsibilities.

1. It is of serious importance then that we should all know our responsibilities, and how minutely they must be looked after, if we are to withstand successfully the judgment after death. David sings in one of his psalms, Thou hast decreed that thy commandments be most carefully observed; and Christ describes His Eternal Father as a most jealous God, who will have the last jot of His own. What He has given us we must return to Him with interest. Observe how all the characters in the sacred drama of the Advent season and of the Christmas festival responded to the immense graces and favors with which God honored them; and learn from their example what labors we must endure to carry out the designs of the Master in our regard. The Angel Gabriel announced to Our Lady the honor God wished to bestow upon her in making her the mother of His Son; the same glorious messenger had just informed Zachary, the father of John the Baptist, of the coming birth of John; he also spoke to St. Joseph in his sleep to have confidence in the integrity of Mary, and again when it was time to take the Child and His mother and fly into Egypt; and to the shepherds watching their flocks on the hills around Bethlehem he brought the news of the birth of their King. Mark the promptness with which all these people, so greatly honored,

responded to the graces offered them. The virgin replied to the Angel's message, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done unto me according to thy word;" St. Joseph's mind was set at rest in the first instance, and in the second he did not hesitate a minute to obey the Angel's command; the shepherds arose on the instant and hastened to adore Christ on His manger throne. Faith and love conspired to make their obedience as illustrious as the grace received.

2. With what courage the Kings of the East followed that star which announced to them the birth of the God-Man. The Jews were too wrapped up in their daily affairs to discover if the time had not come for the fulfilment of the prophecies, and they waited for these devoted strangers to frighten them by the inquiry, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? In spite of the long journey, the temporary disappearance of the star, the apathy of the Jews to their own King, they persevered to the last. How greatly were they rewarded! Old Simeon waited a lifetime in the temple looking for the advent of that Child, whom he was to see and bless, as the Holy Ghost assured him, before his holy eyes closed on this world. The delay did not weary him, and his faithful correspondence with grace was rewarded by that wonderful scene of the Presentation, when Jesus and Mary and Joseph came unto him, and he held in his arms the Holy One of Israel, the long-desired of the world. All these famous souls owe their heavenly happiness and their earthly fame to the promptness and intelligence with which they answered the demands of God. Imagine for a moment the loss to

them had these commands found them sleeping, or incredulous, or wrapped up in the affairs of the world.

3. What excuse is there for us, that we are not as prompt to recognize our responsibilities, and as eager to fulfil them? We often say flippantly, it has not been our happy lot to receive special visits from the angels, illuminations from the Holy Spirit, and interviews with the Kings. What blindness! God has done as much for us in ways suited to our conditions as for the famous saints of the past. Were we to make a list of the favors heaped upon us as members of the one true Church, a book would not be able to hold the account. Look around you on the multitude that know not God. Compare the details of your life with theirs. Before you were conceived the grace of Christ had long been busy preparing for you a religious father and a pious mother, a clean orderly home, devoted friends and relatives, a well-regulated government, opportunities of all kinds for clean and beautiful living. A few days after birth the waters of baptism flowed upon your soul, your first lessons were those of prayer to God; the Church waited for the dawn of reason in you to bring you to the mass, the sacraments; the priest and the guardian angel were ever at your side through the years of youth; sermons, advice, useful books, missions, retreats, instructions were multiplied for you; every step of the way was guarded and beautified in the most wonderful manner. In point of fact the miracles of the first Advent, at which we all wonder, become in our day the daily incidents of common lives, so that they seem wonderful no more, and are even forgotten. Why

should our brethren without the Church have been left without these manifold graces, and we have been overwhelmed by them? Are we not bound, therefore, by greater responsibilities than they? And if we fail to respond will not our failure bring us heavier punishment most deservedly? "And that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."—Luke xii.

III. Use of Our Responsibilities.

1. In this Advent time let us examine once more the duties of our position as Catholics to discover our remissness and arouse our interest. We have seen how the faithful souls of the first Advent acquitted themselves of their duties; we have also seen how the Scribes and Pharisees deliberately rejected the graces poured upon them at that time; we have now to ask ourselves whether we stand in this Advent with Mary, Joseph, the Kings, and the shepherds, or with the unfortunate leaders of the Jewish nation. God has made us the channel of His wonderful graces for ourselves and for our neighbors. Have we deepened that channel with the years so that it now flows deep and broad, carrying joy to all dependent upon us, or have we allowed it to grow shallower as we advanced in years toward our final judgment? Have we allowed it to become choked with the mud and slime of this world, so that we are less pure and devoted today after forty or fifty years of life than in the days of our childhood and youth? How heartily men condemn the sleepy pilot whose drowsiness brought

wreck to the noble ship, how deeply they curse the drunken engineer whose stupor of drink hurled a score of human beings to a cruel death, how universal is execration of the false leader who drove his country to ruin through his ambition! But what of the false souls to whom God confided the salvation of His children, only to see these little ones neglected and lost? What of the lazy and faithless parents, the ungrateful children, the harsh and cheating employers, the untrustworthy and thieving servants, the dissolute youth with their scandalous lives, who should have held the light of Christ up before men, before children, friends, and fellows, yet preferred to extinguish it in their own lives, and so extinguished it for many others? If these condemn the Scribes and the Pharisees, then must they condemn themselves, for they have sinned in precisely the same way.

2. They console themselves with the thought that they have done no harm to Christ, and have kept their evil to themselves. They forget that they have never roused themselves to one real act of the love of God. They have feared Him, as the lord of life and death, before whose throne they may be forced to go this moment; they have trembled at the thought of His hell, which their conduct has deserved; but neither fear nor trembling has stirred their hearts to love. The first and greatest commandment is that we love God with all our hearts. They are unable to observe it, and they will die without having accomplished the first and greatest duty of religion. Wake then, dear brethren, from the sleep which has held you too long. This is the season when all men should be awake to meet the coming King. Turn away from

sin, and look into these grave responsibilities which rest upon you as servants of God. You are all preachers of the gospel of Christ to your dependents, your friends, your neighbors. They must see and feel in you, and even share with you, the graces of your baptism, confirmation, and all the other sacraments which you have received. You are the lamps of Jesus Christ, whom He has filled with fragrant, long-burning oil, and your light must shine before men so clearly that none shall be in doubt but that you are truly the servants of Christ. Woe to you, as formerly to Scribe and Pharisee, if the light has gone out, and men find you a stumbling-block in the darkness.

The Immaculate Conception.

Behold from henceforth all nations shall call me blessed.—St. Luke i. 48.

OUTLINE.

1. The doctrine of Mary's spotless conception approved by Pope Pius IX.
2. The share of the laity in the declaration of a doctrine.
3. The instinctive belief of Catholics in Mary's immaculate conception.
4. The Prophet Isaias is the first to foretell the Virgin's future glory.
5. The virginity of Mary and her Divine maternity.
6. The one measures her personal, the other her public dignity.
7. Through love for Mary the people discover and reject errors respecting Her Son.
8. Thus she guards Jesus in the people's hearts, as once she guarded Him from Herod.
9. Her increasing greatness before men indicates to theologians her spotless conception.
10. To the faith and love of His Son's followers God leaves the declaration of this truth.
11. Greatly is Mary loved and honored of the people, but still more so of Her Divine Son.

I. The Prophecy Fulfilled.

1. A fact which sharply distinguishes Catholics from other believers in Christ is the celebration of this day, passed over by millions of Christians who are ignorant of the truth it commemorates, and pity us believers; while on the other hand millions of Catholics give the day double honor for their neglect, and thank God for giving us so pure and spotless a mother. It is interesting to recall that the believing world once divided on the question of Christ's divinity; the assembled church decided the question at Nice, and the Arians, finding themselves suddenly unchristian, died out. Not many centuries back theologians were divided on the question of Mary's

immaculate conception; Pius IX. by his declaration of the doctrine forever closed the dispute. Before it ended in both cases every argument for and against that man could offer from reason, history, tradition, scripture was well considered; then the church pronounced decision, and so careful was that judgment, so exhaustive had been previous controversy, that these questions have never been re-opened in a hostile spirit with any profit to mankind.

2. Note the share the people had in helping to these decisions. The bishops in council with the Pope at their head made the formal and precise statement of the doctrines; but long previous the Holy Spirit, moving teachers and hearers alike, had brought the people to accept and cherish with the instinct of faith what the teachers had accepted from grace and study together. The individual members of the church are at no time deprived of a proper share in the development of doctrine. They are now building up the future declaration of the dogma of the Assumption by their enthusiasm in celebrating the fifteenth of August. Theologians will point to that universal enthusiasm in the day of final discussion. In every age the Christian has this share in the evolution of truths. So that it is no less an honor to be a listener to the word, silent and humble, than to be its most eloquent teacher. Before God the uneducated faithful, believing and praying, have as honorable share in the declaration of a dogma as the glorious doctor of the Church.

3. Hence in to-day's feast we not only glorify God and His Blessed Mother, we also honor our fathers for the steady faith, the quick response to the Holy

Spirit, which made possible the feast. We know it was the pious and pure lips of our dear ones that besought God to give to a sure instinct the immortality of a dogma. We know their strong faith helped to give it shape. God has so willed it that man shall have a large share in his own redemption. We are often told by our enemies that we are only a dumb herd, believing at the command of our drivers. Here is our answer. Spontaneously we fulfil the prophecy of the Queen of prophets. Every age calls her blessed; teachers and taught with the same impulse cry out; all nations except her from the common taint while the doctors are studying the reasons for exemption. The Pope and bishops of the year 1854 declare the dogma, but the Christians of all races and all times and all conditions have held the truth, and longed for its acceptance. The Holy Spirit does not drive a dumb herd. He leads a human people.

II. The Virgin Mother.

1. Isaias the Prophet was the first to define the future greatness of Mary in his distinct prophecy of her virginity. God had, indeed, announced to Adam a deliverer, and Moses had foretold another leader like himself. But Isaias said: "Hear, O House of Israel! the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. . . . Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel."—Isa. vii. 14. When the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, her reply to his message clearly shows that her virginity had already been consecrated to God, and that she was prepared to surrender the dignity of Divine motherhood rather than lose it. When the woman in

the crowd cried out to the Saviour, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that gave Thee suck," He replied, "Yea, but more blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." The Son of God and His mother were of one mind on the matter, and that mind was very different from the Protestant theory. To serve God perfectly was of greater importance than to hold Mary's high position. Thus thought the Mother of God in preferring her virginity to her glorious maternity; thus thought the Father when He chose a virgin for His Son's mother.

2. Chastity is a virtue in the virgin and in the unmarried alike; but virginity is the noblest form of chastity. In this fact lies the reason why the Mother of God remained a Virgin. After her Son she was to be the glory of the human race. She could have been a chaste and spotless mother, indeed, without virginity, but her chastity would have been inferior in degree to that of many saints, an inferiority which God would not permit. Reason rejects the supposition as heartily as faith rejects it. The maternity of Mary is the measure of her dignity in the church; but the measure of her worth is the spotless purity of her soul, the intensity of her detachment from all things, the strength of her devotion to God, all indicated by her virginity. Catholics love to say of her with truth: "The Lord hath placed His tabernacle in the sun." They rejoice to believe of her that "this gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it: because the Lord, the God of Israel hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut. For the Prince, the Prince himself shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord."—Ezechiel xliv. 2, 3.

III. The Immaculate Conception.

1. In all this we have heard no word of the Immaculate Conception. The Spirit of God, breathing into the millions of Christians that have lived and died in the last eighteen centuries, drew from them one continuous prayer for certainty as to this doctrine. It was left to the faith and love of the people to discover her exemption from the common lot. It came about very simply. A teacher of error strove to destroy the Divinity of Christ, but the people refused to depose the Blessed Mother from her exalted throne. A second teacher of error distinguished between the personality of God and man in the Christ, making two persons where there was but one; again the people refused to follow the erroneous teaching; with them she could never be less than the mother of the Person, the mother of God. The theologians routed the heresies scientifically, but the people, who cannot follow abstruse reasoning, were saved from heresy by their simple love of the Blessed Mother. They could not understand the hair-splitting of the heretics, but they were indignant at the wrong to be inflicted on the Mother.

2. The constancy of the faithful made plain two facts to the teachers: first, that as in the days when Jesus was a little child, His mother cared for and defended Him, so now she defended Him and cared for Him in the hearts of the people; and second, that in becoming the Mother of God her office was to be perpetual and of age-long service to the church. They saw devotion to her blossoming spontaneously

among the people, and renewing its bloom with each generation; then they began to search the Scriptures in order to find the Scriptural foundation for this work of the Holy Spirit. The result is seen and made comprehensible to the simplest mind in the popular Litany of Loretto. The faith and learning of all the ages unite in calling her the Mother of God, the ever-virgin mother, the purest, chastest, most wonderful of mothers; the most renowned, powerful, and merciful of virgins; the mystical rose, the tower of David, the golden house, the ark of God's everlasting covenant with men; the gate of heaven and the morning star; the actual Queen in name and excellence of all the prophets, patriarchs, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins that have served God perfectly, and perfectly honored men.

3. Little by little, stone by stone, our fathers built up the edifice of her greatness. As they built other truths presented themselves. As her dignity, her exalted office, her perfect virtues came home to them slowly and surely, they began to declare that one fact alone could explain this ever-increasing majesty and influence: the Mother of the Lord was conceived without sin, and had never been under its dominion. The conclusion was irresistible. Within five centuries of her death they were discussing the question, perhaps earlier, if we had the records. It was not until the ninth year of Pius IX. that the fact was pronounced a dogma of the faith. At that time the world was sneering at Catholics for the honors paid to Mary. It had already attempted to destroy her virginity, her honor even, and the divinity of her Son: the Church replied by making her almost

divine. "Thou glory of Jerusalem, thou joy of Israel, thou rich honor of the nation."—Jud. xv.

IV. The Victory of Faith.

1. God might have told us explicitly in the Scriptures that the Mother of His Son was utterly sinless; He tells us that she shall crush the serpent's head, and shall be a Virgin; His holiest angels bow before her, humbly salute her; hers is the gift of prophecy; the Kings of the East acknowledge her divine maternity. Yet to the faith and love of His Son's followers He leaves it to discover her spotless conception, the perfection of her nature; to the least and poorest as well as to the greatest. They proclaim it with a courage and a clear vision that surely make the voice of the people the voice of God, and they proclaim it while the world sneers at them.

2. Love and honor the Blessed Mother as we may, the entire Church can never surpass the love and honor received from her Son. He never forgets, as we too often do, that the first embrace, and the last, which He ever received from a mortal, was in her arms; that the first look of His human eyes in the cave of Bethlehem was for her, and for her also His last earthward glance from the cross; that she taught Him His first words in the house of Nazareth, and heard His last upon Calvary; as when a child in His moments of suffering He ran to her for sympathy and aid, so in the mortal anguish of His passion He must have sighed for the help and sympathy of her spotless mother-love. If we sometimes forget these things, brethren, we can surely never forget the holy human

lips that have invoked her name; the saints and martyrs, the common sufferers that have cried to her in supplication. Can they who have stood at the deathbeds of their beloved, and heard the last prayers from dying lips, forget how they mingled the names of Jesus and Mary. Never! and never again from the human heart, any more than from human history, can human power root out the influence of the Virgin Mother, whom all are drawn to, but whom Catholics alone love and honor with truth and with true devotion.

Christmas Day.

For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger.—Luke ii. 11, 12.

OUTLINE.

1. The whole world, both friendly and hostile, pauses each Christmas before the crib of Bethlehem.
2. The scene of the Nativity is one of ordinary family life, father, mother, and Child.
3. But this Child has been long foretold as the glory and salvation of mankind.
4. To save the world men look to statesmen, sages, warriors; but God depends on a Child.
5. God's wisdom made clear to us by the familiar fact that the child rules the world.
6. The child is the emblem of Christianity in his meekness, poverty, and purity.
7. Unless the world possess his natural poverty it goes down to ruin.
8. Unless it have his willing obedience to its own laws it must infallibly perish.
9. Unless, in the main, it practise his chastity disease will invade and destroy it.

I. The Babe of Bethlehem.

1. On Christmas the willing and unwilling world stands at guard over the manger of the Christ. The willing Christian bows with the shepherds before the Son of God, the philosopher acknowledges the birth of the greatest mind among men, the pagans cannot refuse to the ever-recurring mystery of birth a homage which to deny would be an insult to themselves. The Christians accept a Redeemer and a God, the philosophers reverence the greatest human force which time has brought forth, the pagans are willing to celebrate in this event the renewal of the race.

But, willing or unwilling, the entire world pauses each year before this Child, as it has done for twenty centuries, as it must do to the end; all questions of mind, and body, and soul, and the expression of these in society, law, science, and art must enter His birthplace to account for their agreement or difference with Him.

2. In the scene itself there is nothing to explain this universal homage. A woman of rare character nurses the infant; a man of holy mien attends on both; the Child is beautiful in helplessness and innocence; but only the shepherds and the illuminated see and hear the joy and the hymns of the celestial world. It is the everyday scene of life: the family and the home. Thus every human being comes into the world, and is met on the threshold by the mother's arms, by the father's blessing and joy; and no matter how mean the spot, how beggarly the actors, it becomes sanctified by the entrance into nature of its king, mortal in body but immortal in soul, and with an everlasting career before him.

3. True, this child has been expected of the nations, foretold of the Almighty and of the prophets, desired of the great souls of the past. The noblest book of time derives its glory from Him, its sublimity and hope from His character and His coming; the only poets and saints of the early world that are known to history found in Him the inspiration of their genius. Were an artist to paint these noble spirits of the past in one group, Bethlehem would be the perspective of the picture, and their grand faces would be turned in its direction with the one expression of hope and desire. The present world has justified their hopes and

prophecies, and pays tribute to their faith and unquenchable desire. As the Babe was the hope of the past, so is He the joyful possession of the present. As all life centered about Him before His birth, so all interest hinges on Him to-day. A little Child!

II. The True Ruler of Men.

1. The ways of God are beyond all measure by men, yet when they are seen man's reason at once justifies them, while they excite him to boundless admiration. God first manifests Himself to men through the helplessness of a child. If there is one thing man despises it is weakness; nor can he understand how absolute weakness can overcome absolute violence. The philosophers were in a sad condition for a few centuries before Christ with the grand failure of their schemes to revivify the rotten world. They had tried and recommended hundreds of plans for the removal of corruption, and the injection of strength into society. In all these plans their starting-point was a force known to men; a great senate, a leader like Augustus, an orator like Cicero, a philosopher like Plato, a nation like the Roman. God presented them with a Child, poorly born, obscure, persecuted from the beginning. And the maddened Jews, who had looked for a combination of Solomon, David, Moses, and Joshua, planned to kill Him.

2. Yet man and history have justified the Divine plan of redemption. It is not the kings and the philosophers who are the rulers and the movers of the forces of society; it is the child. Those guide,

administer, judge, execute; but he rules. He is the center of the interest, the care, the love of all men. The king himself is the servant of his heir, and a most willing and anxious servant. He is the envied of the great, for he alone is immortal in his ignorance of death, his joy in life, his certainty that present happiness is eternal. The millions toil for him, and get their best inspirations in toiling for him; the sages think out his road, smooth it for his feet, struggle with its obstacles; kings and legislatures execute the sage's schemes in his behalf. One has only to study for a few minutes the details to be in wonder over the multiplied activities of this world in behalf of the child.

3. To get a glimpse of his influence look into the heart of the mother who surrenders but one child to the reaper, Death. The years almost obliterate the little grave, but her tears fall as freshly in her age as on the day of his burial. In a sacred place for many a decade she keeps the little shoes and dresses, the faded toys, the primer, the slate, the pencil, that were such a joy to him; and what day in all her pilgrimage has not seen them anointed with her holy tears? A great name fades from history in half a century; but the hand of a little child reaches out from its grave over the same period to stir a human heart to its noblest grief. In fact, the great strength of a mother's love is that its roots are in the memory of a child, who may grow to maturity, achieve greatness, fade into decrepitude; yet the mother sees only the child that tugged at her bosom. It was Mary's keenest sorrow that she saw on Calvary's cross the innocent, helpless Babe of Bethlehem. It was

Divine wisdom that having spoken to us formerly through the prophets, "in these days hath spoken to us by His Son," the little Child of Bethlehem.

III. Keystone of Christianity.

1. The Child is therefore the emblem of the Christian life. It was Our Lord that one day placed in the midst of the wrangling Apostles a little child and said: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. xviii. 3. The meaning is plain; ours must be the spirit of the child in all things; we must cultivate as an offset to the violence of selfishness the conviction of our helplessness, our dependence on God; and as against our lust the love of purity, which is secured to the child through his innocence. This is only another way of saying that the state to which the monk binds himself by vow, the true follower of Christ must accept as the proper condition for his salvation. Poverty, obedience, and chastity, in one sense, are as necessary to spirituality in the layman as, in another sense, they are necessary to the religious. They are certainly the characteristics of the state of childhood, which has no wealth, no wit but simplicity, and finds its chief safety and happiness in obedience, its highest protection in its innocence. What then becomes of honest wealth, freedom, and pleasure, cries the worldling.

2. The answer is very apt and even overpowering. Society itself depends on that very state of poverty, obedience, and chastity for its happy continuation. The command and the example of Christ, and the

laws of society on the one hand, on the other the stern conditions of nature, give even the libertine no choice between decency based on the three detachments of the monk, practised on a lower standard, and the punishment of the lawbreaker. Is not the general condition of living men that of poverty? Only the few are born so rich as to need no effort in money-making. The individual and the nation alike begin existence with the soil and their bare hands as the elements of future wealth. At what period in the history of any known nations did the majority become rich? In fact without poverty the spur to effort is lost for the crowd. It is not wealth which ever accomplished anything for man, except as the servant of the industrious; and wherever it became the master, either of the citizens or the state, the latter at once sank into decay. Our Lord declared an economic, as well as a spiritual fact, when He cried out, "Woe unto you, ye rich." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven." "And the rich man died, and was buried in hell." To be ever poor, and ever laborious, this is the lot of man, and in this consists his happiness; which even the rich man admits, since he is never tired of adding to his treasure, preferring activity to mere contemplation of dead gold. Ask the dead money-kings of the past what ease does wealth bring to the heart at any time.

3. Obedience is the necessary condition of man as much for the elder as for the child. The latter looks utterly to the parent, the parent looks to God, and reason points out the necessity of strict deference to the laws of existence. Who can refuse to enter the

world through the womb of his mother, or to leave it when vitality dies? Who can offend the laws of nature and live; throw himself from a height, feed on poisons, leap into water, fire, or noxious gases? One must eat to live, and work is the condition of getting bread. As children we have no choice but to obey, as human beings we must live such or perish, as members of society we must obey its laws or suffer extinction, as dependents upon our surroundings for physical necessaries we must conform to their nature or seek another world. These are the days of revolutions, and talk is large and bombastic over our powers, rights, liberties; but these essentials no revolution can affect, no orations change, and when men reject them they do so successfully only by suicide. In the moral order we have the same conditions. The various isms are simply crimes against the nature of things as God constituted them; and while they may satisfy the reason for a time, their true result is only to blind and deaden men to the inevitable disaster. All men must obey as scrupulously where their will is free, as where their nature binds them; or suffer accordingly.

4. It is still more wonderful how necessary from the mere conditions of nature is chastity, not as a virtue but as a condition. With all the impurity in the world, and the desire for it, and the schemes to secure indulgence, the grand majority of men are compelled to chastity through one or another necessity. The millions that die before nature or opportunity permits impurity; the millions for whom age destroys power and inclination; the millions happily led into control of their inclinations through religion,

early marriage, or other influences; the steady labor of the multitude, which means sobriety and normal impulses for many millions more; the intervals of sickness, and a score of other hindrances; all serve to confine unchastity as a habit to the minority of the race. Even those, who through riches and leisure are enabled to indulge their passions, suffer from the limitations of nature; and with all their desire and opportunity they must live for long periods as chaste in deed as any virtuous monk, if only to save their wretched lives for later indulgence. And just as chastity is necessary in the individual so is it necessary to the race and the state, if they are to survive.

5. Since, then, poverty, obedience, and chastity are necessities for men, both from the command of God and the nature of things, Our Lord in His scheme of right living would simply give us the merit of honorably intending that which in the order of nature we must do if we would save ourselves here as well as hereafter. To live up to His law with knowledge we must get His help and His instruction; and for this came He into the world, made Himself one of us, came as a child, lived as a child, died as a child, and left us His positive declaration that we must also become children in docility, simplicity, purity, dependence, obedience, attachment to Him, indifference to the world. And what else do we become at the last moment in spite of our pride and violence; when sickness leaves us to be attended as in our infancy, and the shadow of death takes our thoughts and desires from the money, the estate, the success which once fooled us into believing that we were gods, able to stand forever on our own merits.

We leave the world as we entered it, children. But how few have kept until the last the sweetness of soul and holy innocence which Jesus and Mary and a few of the followers of the Master retained through the grace of God to the end. Compare with all that has here been said the following quotations from Isa. xi. 6, and Matt. viii.

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them." "And Jesus calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven."

New Year's Day.

When a man hath done then shall he begin.—Ecclus. xviii. 6.

OUTLINE.

1. The beginning of an enterprise is usually full of interest, and for many enterprises this remains the only interest.
2. To be ever beginning is the best fight men can make against the natural tendency to decay.
3. Those who pursue sin, pleasure, fame, wealth are often in one respect models for religious souls who make ragged beginnings.
4. In the day of resolutions give the soul, as the nobler part, the first place and the closest attention.
5. Give Christ the Lord, our one sure, steadfast Friend, the most steadfast resolutions.
6. Let church, country, family, and friends have their due share of good resolves.
7. This continuous beginning each year is a foretaste of heaven, which is the eternal beginning.
8. The great resolution of the Christian life is that we bend all our energies to the true service of Christ in faith, hope, and love.

I. Never Tire of Beginning.

1. We are at the doorway of another year, and the horizon shines clear with the sun of hope. Once more we make a beginning of time, and our hearts are cheerful, because we see in our dreams the ploughed field, the scattered seed, the blooming wheat and corn, the ripened and gathered harvest, the rich returns of a year's labors. Hope always fires our hearts thus in the beginning of a work which interests us. The beginnings of human things are always interesting, even where tragedy is certain to overshadow the end. The coming of the tender spring, with its wealth of color, bloom, and perfume stirs the coldest heart, warms the chilliest blood; the strong ship

setting out upon her long voyage with sails wide spread to the wind, the young lovers launching their ship of wedded love on life's violent sea, the little babe just leaving the font, the sinewy youth plunging vigorously into the struggle for fortune, these and kindred things touch us all alike. Who is there that had not his beginning, his hour of hope and vision and lofty purpose? Nor would the most despairing of us break in upon these beautiful moments with stories of broken lives, of withered hopes, of dreams that came to nothing, of labor without reward. It would be to small purpose if we did, for men will make their beginnings, though all the wrecks of time lay hideous on the harbor shore. The hope that burns in the youthful heart remains undaunted by the tales of experience. It is pitiful that so many beginnings remain no more than beginnings; the ship founders, or floats waterlogged on strange, deserted seas, the lovers become drabs, the babe grows up a loafer, the youth reaps the harvest of disaster.

2. We are always beginning in time, because life is a current whose banks are ever changing and ever new. Each bend in the river is a new starting-point. The babe struggles for speech, the child for knowledge, the youth for experience, the man for success, the old for health and longer living. There is in everything mundane a tendency to decay, which is unconquerable in the long run; but the energy of life is best shown in resisting its advance until that moment ordained by God as the limit of our mortal career. Therefore, we should never tire of beginning, which is the best evidence of energy and healthful activity. And although we have all come to smile

at the custom of taking a fresh start on the first day of the year, and often ridicule its new resolutions, the custom and the resolutions are part of our nature, and more than commendable. It is our fight against decay. The resolution is an acknowledgment that the past could have been better, it is a sign that we know our own weaknesses and are bent upon removing them, it is an evidence that hope and will in us are not dead, and that we still have vitality sufficient to direct our course rather than to drift with the current, helpless and indifferent.

3. We are often too indifferent or too ashamed to make resolutions on this day looking to the betterment of our spiritual condition. We can resolve to drink less, to live more carefully as to health, to spend less money on gaming, to spend more time at home, to read more wisely, to cultivate prudence, and other natural virtues; but in religious matters we are not quite so ready. In this point we can take a lesson from those concerned in mere worldly affairs. Here is the man who pursues the way of sin, and finds it pleasant travelling; on this day he looks back at his course, revels once more in its delights, sees how they might have been increased, and finds himself urged to a cheerful resolve to continue on his way, reserving his forces for those forms of enjoyment which give most pleasure with least waste of time and health. The man of business carefully examines the ground he has travelled, discovers the avenues which gave him richest return, and resolves to drop all others but these. The man of income and leisure goes over the past years with no less care, finds numerous pleasures which are a mere waste of time,

and others which repay cultivation with interest, and resolves to avoid the one and to pursue the other. All these materialists enter upon the new year with fresh resolves to enjoy life, to make the most of time. Should the religious man do less? Should not the man who is convinced of his soul's existence and destiny do as much for eternal life as sinners do for sin, rich men for pleasure, business men for trade?

II. Special Resolutions.

1. It is therefore a useful and noble custom which urges us to make fresh resolves for the new year in all our departments. Very few but will attend to matters of health, fortune, and family. It is for sincere Christians to do as much for their souls, the better part of them, which is to survive forever the passing interests of this world. The first and best resolution for them is that in the coming year they will give the soul a chance to rise from the prison of routine in which it has been so long confined, and to breathe the heavenly mountain air. These divine souls of ours, how little we feel for them, understand and pity them! they were made for the companionship of angels, of Christ Himself, and we bind them to ledgers, and fashion, and other slaveries. An angel chained to earth and shut off from heaven could hardly suffer more. Let us resolve at this moment to release them from their prison, to deny ourselves, as the epistle says, "ungodliness and worldly desires," and to send our souls frequently into the sweet fields of prayer, meditation, good reading, to bathe them in the grace of the sacraments and of the Holy Spirit,

and above all to give them frequent converse with Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

2. He is the one friend who is ever faithful to the soul. We are very proud of our fidelity to our friends, and of their devotion to us, which often affects us to tears. As often as we think of their kind hearts and faithful services we are moved to stronger resolves to be worthy of and to return that service and love. Yet how poor appears the dearest and most helpful friend of longest service beside the Master whose love has pursued us from conception, and is alone able to succor us in the really trying moments of life. Although "the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men," and especially to the Catholic, it is not certain that even the pious Catholics have always a strong and vivifying love for their Saviour. They look upon Him as God, they know that all things are ruled by Him, they feel certain of meeting Him one day at judgment, they have a deep regard for His majesty and power, they adore Him by faith in the Blessed Sacrament; but the one thing which He desires they are often unable through sheer incompetence to give,—their hearts. They rather fear than love Him. In human life it is not a pleasant household where the father is feared rather than loved, nor would an intelligent and loving father care for such a distinction. It is love that Our Lord wants, pulsating human love, purified and elevated by the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless human love. The first resolve then of this day should be to acquire by petition a true love for Our Master. It is sad that too often we do not know how to go about getting that love. We who are so skilful in stirring our

hearts to a throbbing love of human beings, and securing their love in return, even where they care little for us at first, are at a loss to discover how we shall love Jesus Christ. "Ask and you shall receive."

3. Christ and the soul having received the homage of our first resolutions, it is inevitable that other resolves should second them for the sake of clearer sight and wiser action in our dealings with those around us. Loving Christ and freeing the soul from bondage to earthly things, we cannot but love the church, our country, our family, and our friends more deeply and wisely. Yet we must also resolve upon these things. As we are often ignorant of Christ and our own souls in the higher ways, so are we often ignorant of church, country, family, and friends. We take them as we take the air, things to which we have a strict right every instant of life. And we rather expect service from them, as from the air, than the rendering of constant and intelligent service to them. We work for them, it is true, but it is in great part selfish service, that which pleases us and does not greatly benefit them. For example, one is satisfied with a reasonable alms to the church, a bland feeling of patriotism and prompt payment of taxes to his country, a supposed commercial education to his children, and the exchange of sentiment with friends; yet he may be so ignorant of his church's history as not to know the day of its foundation or the name of its first Pope, unwilling to lift a finger for the overthrow of intolerable abuses in the state, harsh to his children in exercising paternal authority or rarely at home with them, and very devoted to friends who care not a button for him ex-

cept when he can help them. These sins are very common, and are apt to be grave enough to the parties concerned. Therefore, the resolution of this day should be, in regard to the Church, some knowledge of her history and deeper appreciations of her claims upon us: in regard to the country a determination to play the part of prudent and courageous citizens in all matters with which we may lawfully interfere; in regard to our families, the cultivation of intimacy with our own and the study of all things connected with their welfare; in regard to our friends and neighbors, to seek rather their happiness than the gratification of our own selfishness. In all which we simply follow the Scriptures: "The first commandment of all is, Hear, O Israel: the Lord thy God is one God. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the first commandment, and the second is like to it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these." Thus spoke Our Lord to the Jews according to St. Mark xii. 29. And St. Paul added his word in writing to Titus his disciple: "Admonish them to be subject to princes and powers." In a word, to use the saying of the epistle, "we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world."

4. In this way we are forever beginning the spiritual life with the day upon which Our Lord may be said to have begun His official life, for on this day He received His holy name of Jesus. We are thus resisting decay at every point, decay in business, in body, in mind, in duty, in soul, and we are

living a life bearing a likeness to that life eternal for which we men are destined. That life is an endless beginning, a morning which never loses the glory of the morning, though bright as the noon and soft as the evening. All our labors in this world get their meaning and their beauty from the life to come, and have no beauty or significance without that life. We look "for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" with the great St. Paul. That hope and that coming cast their united glory over the simple daily life of millions of Christians, and give them a tremendous significance. We begin here to end, there to continue forever; we labor here in uncertainty often and in distress, there all distress is exchanged for joy; our greatest and most sucessful enterprises do not secure us against anxiety and sorrow here, yet if carried on in the proper spirit they earn us eternal peace in heaven; very often we are failures from the world's standpoint, our fortunes vanish, our children go their own ways and our friends desert us until we become of no consequence; yet these very disasters, accepted with resignation and borne with patience, are coin which will make us very rich in eternity. It is certainly a good thing to have the peace and confidence of success, wealth, health, dear friends, and other fine things of earth; but it is still better to possess above these things the peace of Christ, which surpasseth all understanding.

The Epiphany.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.—John i. 11.

OUTLINE.

1. The Magi are astonished to find Jerusalem unprepared for the King they were seeking.
2. The doctors of the law, however, are able to inform them that Bethlehem is to be the birthplace of the Messiah.
3. On the way to Bethlehem they meet again the star, which would not shine over the corrupt City of David.
4. The opportunity which Herod the Great lost on this occasion.
5. A similar glorious opportunity lost by the proud leaders of the Jews.
6. Strangers greet the King in Bethlehem, while His own stand apart in ignorance.
7. The miserable after-fate of Herod and his dynasty.
8. The extinction of the Scribes and the Pharisees.
9. The holy Kings alone come down in history, beloved and honored for their faith and courage.

I. The King's City.

1. It was truly a sensation which the wise men of the East created when they entered Jerusalem, and began their inquiries for Him that was born King of the Jews. Having lost the star that for so long had guided them, it was only natural and sensible that they should make their way to the capital city of the new King, and look for Him there surrounded by His court and His army, the object of adoration and love, a prince of his people and the regenerator of the world. What a murmur of emotion rose from the people of Jerusalem at the sight of these princes and their retinue, at the first utterance of that tremendous question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" The people were prepared for the question; it was the hope of their lives and of the

nation; but the court heard it with misgiving and alarm. Their plans for pleasure and power had not at any time taken into consideration a new king, a new dynasty, even the Messiah; and His appearance at that moment meant disaster for them. All gathered about these sages from the mysterious East to ask and to wonder. The sages were not less puzzled at the general ignorance of the One Being for whom the earth longed. At the birth of an heir to a great throne, the great few and the common multitude stand about the chamber, the ambassadors of other nations are in waiting, the majesty just brought into the world is saluted with military honors, the greeting of race and nations. Yet to the immense disappointment of the kings, in His capital the new-born King is known only to themselves, strangers, and no eye has yet seen Him.

2. Still, the Magi find that He is not altogether unknown. The Scribes and the Pharisees, the Doctors of the law, the princes of the court, nay, even the king himself, the great and cruel Herod, gather together to explain to these ambassadors of the Gentiles all that the prophets of the nation have foretold of the new King. It is declared upon their authority that His birthplace is to be in Bethlehem, and the time for His appearance is not distant, if the computations are correct. Probably they explained their own indifference to the mission of the sages by a courteous indication of their belief that the new King would appear first in the palaces of the king, so stamped with power and glory that no one could mistake or resist Him. The sages in telling their story could only say that tradition and prophecy and star

had led them, that they knew nothing of the manner of His coming, that their supposition was He would be found in the reigning house. The court must have smiled at the story of the star. But for their wealth and importance the Magi might have been accused of a clever trick to secure notoriety and consequent gain. As it was none considered them more than sincere enthusiasts, whose search would end in disappointment. Herod, relieved of fear, ironical, courteous to the last, accepting the implied compliment of their inquiry in his city, cautious as became the statesman of a slippery age, gave them secret audience, asked for further explanations of their motives, and dismissed them with the request that they would permit him to join them in adoration of the Child, when found.

3. Alas! outside of Jerusalem the star shines over their pathway again! Its tender light disdained the great city; it was a star of innocence and joy, whose light was never meant for the polluted town on whose throne sat Herod, in whose court schemed a Caiphas, within whose limits was Calvary. The Child of their search was found in an obscure cave of an obscure town, surrounded by common laborers, nursed by a woman of the multitude, guarded by a carpenter, too poor to pay for the lodging of a merchant, not to speak of a prince. Yet how truly were these men princes of faith and wisdom is made clear by their adoration of the King, their joyful acknowledgment of His nature; falling down they adored Him, offering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. What privileges the Child lavished on them: to converse with Mary and Joseph, to hear the story of the

wondrous events of the past year, to read the prophecies of His coming and to see the fulfilment of a few with their own eyes, and to carry the Holy Infant again and again in their arms. While at a little distance slept, ate, drank, schemed, and sinned the stupid court of Herod; too lazy or too busy, too incurious to follow these men, or to set a commonplace spy on them, and thus secure the Master of the world. Yet can we criticise them for their indifference with the certainty that our nation is any the better prepared for the Christ than were the Jews for Bethlehem? We have only to look into our own hearts, into our own high places and great cities, to feel that the star would disdain them as it did Jerusalem, and that Herod and Calvary have there a footing.

II. Lost Opportunities.

1. The peoples of the world might be easily described as the children of lost opportunities. It thrills us at this day to see how much the shrewd and talented Herod missed when he let the Kings depart so easily. He was a man of boundless ambition, who would have sacrificed a world to secure for himself a deathless name at the close of a career of despotic power. This was his greatest opportunity. He was king of that domain in which Christ was born; to find and adore Him, to present Him to His people and to act as regent for His youth would have secured for Herod immortal fame and everlasting life. Alas! to see such an opportunity and to use it, Herod would have to be born again. Ambition supported by crime, a life of sin, had closed his eyes to

truth, as sin closes the eyes of the soul to its own advantages. The three Kings came and went carrying the gifts of God with them, and Herod saw them depart from his gates never to entertain them or their gifts again. His judgment!

2. Beside him stood the Scribes and the Pharisees, never in their lives so blind as at that critical moment, never more deserving of the reproach of the Saviour: "Blind leaders of the blind." They could give to the Kings with a sneer the exact spot where the Christ was to be found, but could not summon enough energy to go out and see for themselves. They had already formed from their own stormy hearts an idea of the Messiah, and to them any other was a manifest absurdity. Their joy was power and place, and all things necessary to secure and continue their ambitions; luxurious lives in splendid palaces, the praise and service of men, the control of the nation, success in statecraft and war, immense wealth and noble blood. And their Messiah was the concrete image of this materialism. He was to be a prince of David's line, unconnected with carpenters; a warrior of genius and success; an unparalleled statesman and an absolute tyrant; whose wealth, power, luxury, no less than his faithful observance of the Pharisaical law, would astonish and subdue the world to Judaism, that is, to the Scribes and Pharisees. Their opportunity also came and went with the Kings, for they too would have to be made over again to understand the Christ. Yet how simple the means, how cheap the price at which they would have purchased the gratitude of mankind; a mere ride to Bethlehem, an adoration of the Child, and a presentation of Him to the

people; and thenceforward the world was theirs and immortal life beside. Theirs was Herod's judgment.

3. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Oh! the pity of it. The stranger from far-off countries alone seizes the opportunity to greet and acknowledge the new-born King. The prophecies were fulfilled in their coming, but what a shame their sole acknowledgment cast upon the chosen people. For their faith to feed upon there were only the ancient traditions, the accounts of the Holy Books of the Jews, the stories of travellers, and last of all the star; what immense difficulties they must have faced and overcome to acquire their conviction, to understand the star, to reach Jerusalem, to pierce the veil of obscurity which hung about the Divinity of the Child; what a contrast the lavish preparation spent upon the chosen people! It reminds us of those mournful cases, in which the poor pagan, standing for half a lifetime without the temple, is suddenly pierced with the knowledge and love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and can never leave Him again; while many a baptized Christian in utter indifference to the God he has never recognized with all the training lavished on him, can sneer or wonder at the enthusiasm of the convert.

III. The Penalties.

1. The faith of the Kings had its reward, and the infidelity of the court its fearful punishment. Herod had lost his last chance, and madness seized him; not the madness of the brain but of the heart, the most fearful visitation which man can bring upon

himself. With his powerful brain clear till his death hour, but with a heart given over to fury, remorse, despair, as really mad as the brain could be, as disordered, he passed from one crime to another as suspicion led him. The rumors growing that the kings so sneered at had really found the Child and fled the land, Herod put to the sword the Innocents of Bethlehem, and ferociously pursued the Holy Family and the Magi as far as his power extended. His life closed in painful despair. He had proved himself great as the world accounts greatness, he had founded a dynasty which was to be snuffed out by the Roman power as one snuffs a candle, the crimes of his life were not to sustain it a moment after Cæsar condemned, several fools were to succeed him on his bloody throne to imitate only his crimes and shame him by their folly: here was the sum and substance of his achievements. He was to go down to history as the murderer of infants, and the devourer of his own family.

2. Yet hard as was the fate he brought upon himself it was agreeable compared with that prepared by the Scribes and the Pharisees. They are no longer to be found on the earth; with the dynasty of Herod they are in the dust. Their name is the universal synonym for hypocrisy and vile cunning. They possess the dishonor of having led their people into that ditch out of which there is no getting. The people remain, but they are not; the temple is gone, and the nation is scattered, a reproach wherever they are found, no matter how innocent their lives; their rituals, etiquette, interpretations of the law are the scorn and the ridicule of the sensible and the

scholarly; to be and to be known as a Pharisee is the special dishonor among men.

3. The Kings alone stand before history as the benefactors of mankind, and their day is the feast-day of the nations; it sheds gladness over the whole earth; in Spain the children put little shoes on the window-sills on the eve of the feast, that the good Kings, who loved one Child so dearly, may fill them with gifts on their way to Bethlehem. Their wisdom reflects its lustre on the nations who in their day knew not God, and on their present descendants. They were our representatives before the throne of Bethlehem, the representatives of the human race, foretold of the prophets and loved of all that since have followed the Christ. They arose out of obscurity and returned to its gloom; we guess at their names, their country, their after-lives; but it is a gloom more beautiful than the light of the most profound history; for we know they were chosen of God, simply by noting the persons in the gospel who were permitted to recognize the Saviour and the unfortunate who would not see Him; the one class were saints, the other wilful and malicious sinners. The Holy Spirit has said also, after the mournful words at the head of this discourse: "But to as many as hath received Him, He hath given power to become the sons of God, to those who believe in His name."

St. Patrick.

Behold a great priest, who in his days was pleasing to God, and was found just, and in the time of wrath was made a reconciliation.—The Breviary.

OUTLINE.

1. The sceptical point to the poor condition of Ireland when the greatness of this early missionary is described.
2. The Irish have again and again been declared an inferior race because of their devotion to the true faith.
3. In declaring this to the whole world, men flung, as it were, a challenge in the face of Christ to defend his own.
4. The Irish exodus of the last fifty years seemed to justify the slanders against the people.
5. Yet it was much to have kept the faith against all persecution, and against time itself for so many centuries.
6. Finally, in this century Christ makes answer to the challengers.
7. The triumphs of the race and its religion through the very exile which was intended to destroy it.
8. The severe punishment of their enemies, and the vindication of Saint Patrick.

I. The Challenge to Christ.

1. The character and labor of St. Patrick have long been placed beyond dispute by scholars, and the great missionary takes rank with the greatest of his time as a miracle of holiness and of devotion. Yet in our day, when men look on the miserable social condition of the country he Christianized, many a sneer touches the lip because the faith has not been of material benefit to Ireland. St. Patrick has even to be defended against his own children in this matter, when national pride gets uppermost in the heart. All admit that the wealth and rank of Ireland among the nations might have been very high at this moment had the Irish joined the English in the deliberate

treason against Christ, perpetrated by the delectable Henry VIII. and his virtuous court. But it is to be doubted if wealth and worldly honor could make up to any nation for the disgrace of association with such a crew as compassed the destruction of English Catholicity. The history of Ireland has yet to be written, sad as has been its long and mournful preface. And as the years are but minutes to the patient Lord, the rest of the volume may so dim with glory the tragic past, as to make the time of persecution briefer than it now appears. God does not desert His saints. To the end He leads them "through the right ways," so that no man can point the finger of scorn at them. In our day He has justified St. Patrick even to the political economists.

2. When poverty drove the people of Ireland to America, the road was made harder by the gratuitous insults of certain English journals, which ridiculed the sorrowful exodus, and announced to the whole world that the meanest part of the British empire was pouring itself out on the American shore. No order of exile, such as Russia put upon the Jews, drove the Irish from their native soil; in consequence, Englishmen were asked for an explanation of the phenomenon, thousands of citizens flying from the most prosperous nation in the world to a political rival of the British power beyond the Atlantic wave. The reply of certain English leaders in parliament and in print was memorable and characteristic. They said to the listening world: the Irish are an inferior race by nature, and an ignorant, dirty, unprogressive race by choice; having long kept up an unequal conflict with their superior rivals, and having reached the

end of their resources, they are retreating like vanquished barbarians deeper into the wilderness, and will soon be absorbed by the wilds of America; devoted to superstition, eternally hostile to the religion of Henry VIII., too stubborn to strike a treaty of self-extinction with the English nation, they leave their lands to the superior race, and depart to do the kitchen work of America, for which their rude temperament is well adapted. These apologists did not explain why their lofty civilization had had so little influence upon the children of St. Patrick. The penal laws, which made education a crime in Ireland, and rewarded such violations of the commandments as favored English rule among the Irish, were not mentioned; the industrial wrongs suffered by the Irish that English manufacturers might grow richer, the artificial famines, the premium put upon dirt, and other outward shows of wretchedness, were left undescribed.

3. It was simply said, as a self-evident fact, with which Europe was well acquainted, that the Catholic superstition had degraded the Irish as deeply as the Protestant inspiration had lifted the English to the pinnacle of glory. English preachers from a thousand pulpits offered this degraded mob of exiles, pouring out of English ports with tearful eyes and pallid faces, as a terrific illustration of the wickedness of Catholicity. If the Irish were mean, ignorant, poor, superstitious, dirty, incapable of political power, unworthy to hold their own lands, worshippers of St. Patrick, it was all because of their devotion to Rome. This was the sole source of their vileness. The United States was congratulated iron-

ically on securing the refuse of Great Britain for the building up of its empire. Emerson, the stone prophet of a dead Puritanism, referred classically to the Irish immigration as "the black vomit." In other words the fidelity of the people converted from paganism to Christ by St. Patrick, their fidelity to the Christ of Judea, of Calvary, of Mount Olivet, of the Apostles, of the ages of persecution, was made the cause of their misery and supposed worthlessness. The whole world was made to understand this belief of the proud nation which had vanquished St. Peter and St. Patrick in its triumph over the bitter obstinacy of the Irish. Thus a challenge was flung down publicly to Christ in the face of the whole world; His most faithful people were made an illustration of the results of his principles.

II. The Answer of Christ.

1. It was impossible that such a challenge should go unanswered. Yet the first years of the exodus seemed to justify the worst tales of the slanderers. No kindly greeting met the Irish in America, deeply as they loved the nation which had succeeded where they had failed. The sour souls of men like Emerson had curdled the milk of human kindness in the land. Poverty and oppression they had left behind, cold hearts and mean tongues were their portion in the land of the stranger. Even persecution sought them out for a brief period, and in liberty's name burned their churches, stole their children, bribed their orphans and leaders, and shut the doors to fortune and advancement. The bigots could not bear to

see them other than slaves, a visible argument against the Pope. A few gleams of light shone on their history and condition. It was something to have kept the faith undefiled, and the race distinct from the race of apostates. It was very much to have made white chastity a national virtue and fidelity to Peter a national tradition at a time when impurity and treason ravaged the independent Catholic nations of Europe.

2. Then, of a sudden, the clouds burst from over the devoted race, and the Irish stood revealed in the radiance of a new day. The eyes of English heresy might well have withered before the sight, and the lying tongue of Froude certainly met paralysis at the spectacle. While the bloody mist of war hung over the American Republic, and England was busy watching the hoped-for tragedy, a new birth had taken place, which only the daylight of peace revealed. The organization of the children of St. Patrick had come to pass under the banner of the cross. In quick succession Hughes, McCloskey, Gibbons wore the highest honors of the Roman Church, and held immense influence over the American people; while behind them stood a hierarchy of numbers and distinction. Sheridan's superb figure posed before Europe as the commander-in-chief of the American army, and around him stood a score of fighting generals, whose faith and blood boded little good to England. Millionaires of every degree, political leaders of all shades of ability, representatives in all departments of human activity, senators, governors, representatives, judges, litterateurs, artists, held their own in numbers on American soil, unashamed of their

faith or their blood. And this wondrous vision was repeated in every country that spoke the English tongue; in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, even in England itself. The inferior race, the dirty, ignorant, superstitious race, had in three decades shown itself the very contrary; or had left it to its enemies to explain how inferiority, dirt, ignorance, and superstition, under certain circumstances, can surpass civilization of the English sort in elevating men. Thus did Christ answer the challenge flung down to Him so confidently, and thus did he vindicate his people, and their holy leader. "The Lord led the just man in all his ways, showed him the kingdom of God, . . . made him honorable in his labors, and completed his labors."—Breviary.

III. The Punishment.

1. Not only was there vindication, but also punishment. Very significant, very instructive is that punishment. The Anglican heresy has found its strongest ally in the English language, so widely spread over the globe. The Irish were robbed of their Celtic tongue, and had the English tongue forced upon them, one would think, for the sole purpose of teaching the English-speaking nations how deep was the treachery of the Eighth Henry and his brood of conspirators against the truth; and it may be added, for the purpose of inspiring the same nations with a hearty distrust of this great apostate, so proud of her apostasy. The Irish and their children have used the English tongue as their best weapon, in poetry and prose, in politics and journalism, in the home and

the forum, for solidifying universal opposition to the English name. Thus have they repaid their oppressor for the robbery of the tongue in which St. Patrick spoke to them.

2. Very proud has England been of her political prestige everywhere, and her particular influence in certain countries. Her leaders have always attributed this prestige and influence to the religion of Henry VIII. Wherever the Irish have settled, their vigorous faith and outspoken opposition have either destroyed or neutralized the power of the English name. An anti-English policy alone is popular in the United States, and no administration dare adopt one favorable to England. In Canada and Australia men like D'Arcy McGee and Gavan Duffy shook her influence by constitutional measures. In Ireland her grip has been loosened in the same way. She robbed the Irish of their right to live in their own land, and in return they have weakened her prestige and influence, by making known the enormities of her rule in Ireland and elsewhere. Proud of her heresy, bloody in her crimes to graft it on the Irish, she has been repaid for her malice by the erection of hierarchies in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and the resurrection of the Scotch and English hierarchies, all made possible by the spread of the Irish over the world, by her deliberate banishment of the Irish race from their native isle. In fact, wherever the English language is spoken at this time, the Irish have built up against the English heresy a social and religious organization, subversive of its influence and humiliating to its pride, which cannot be reached by English power.

3. It is easy to see, therefore, that God has not deserted the faithful race, nor forgotten the apostle who carried the faith to Erin. It is often said that still greater honors than these mentioned would have resulted had Ireland remained unstained by degrading vassalage to England. Granted. Yet when we remember the uncalled-for apostasy of England, and the shameful condition of France, when we recall the changes which wealth and power produce in the virtuous, it is not so certain that Ireland would have remained faithful and filled so wonderful a place in the history of this time. It is evident that her history is but beginning. Her years of sorrow are mysterious, as human misery must ever be. We cannot fathom the suffering of a child, much less the suffering, the long martyrdom of a nation. But we are close enough to the dawn of Ireland's coming day to recognize that it will be very wonderful, if it fulfils the promise of this moment. And its glory will not be born of bloody conquest or treaty-cheating, but of the peace and good will of Christ.

St. Joseph.

A holy death makes others divine after death, and glory embraces those who have earned the palm; but thou, more blessed in thy wonderful destiny, while yet a mortal equalled the celestials in the full enjoyment of God.—Breviary Hymn.

OUTLINE.

1. The splendor of this feast of St. Joseph as it is kept around the world is remarkable.
2. Greatly as public heroes are honored, their celebrations do not compare with those accorded to the carpenter of Nazareth.
3. He was chosen as the guardian of Jesus because his life was lofty and pure.
4. He was chosen patron of the Church before any of its great popes and doctors because he had so faithfully guarded its Founder.
5. The most fervid imagination fails in attempting to describe this humble man's relationships with Jesus and the Blessed Trinity.
6. Living for thirty years with the Son of God, he dies in His arms, and enters Limbo the ambassador from Jesus to the holy souls in prison.
7. Since the foundation of the Church his fame has grown with each age, and it is piously believed that with Jesus and Mary he rejoices body and soul in heaven.
8. He is not only the protector of the Church, but also the model and patron of the dying, and of all faithful fathers devoted to their families.

I. The Guardian of Jesus and Mary.

1. An important feast of the universal Church is that of St. Joseph, and its celebration is in its details a wonderful thing. The majority of men never see beyond the three-mile horizon of their particular locality, and to the average Catholic the feast of a saint means the public Mass in his honor and a mere mention of the saint's name. Yet it would take much space and time to tell all the notable and beautiful things that will be done this day in St. Joseph's honor. Thousands of churches scattered around the habitable globe will repeat his glorious name in the

public prayers, a splendid ritual will do him public honor, thousands of priests will recite his office in the breviary, sermons will be preached on his life and virtues, hymns will be sung to him in all the languages of earth, and the Catholic millions will invoke him. Could one get above the earth for these twenty-four hours, and with angelic faculties see and hear all this while the globe revolves under the sun, the spectacle, the human harmonies would ravish as if from heaven.

2. We are more impressed with the public celebration in honor of a civic hero, in honor of Washington for instance, or of our dead soldiers on Decoration Day, or of the Day of Independence. Napoleon the Great is a world's hero, and his fame and genius are brought home to the meanest in many ways. His story is made common in print, his portraits are everywhere, his deeds of battle are on fine canvasses, in bronze, in books, in engravings, in poems and novels and histories, his statues cover France and are in the art museums of the nations. Frenchmen go wild with enthusiasm at the mention of his name. Yet the public celebrations in his honor, in honor of Washington, or our dead soldiers, or Independence Day are small matters compared with the honors tendered to St. Joseph on this feast. All nations observe it; he is praised in every language; his statues adorn a million churches, schools, and homes; his altars are buried in lights and flowers; and the human millions, the sick, the unfortunate, the wretched, the sinful, the grateful, murmur his name in petition and in thanksgiving. What honors could compare with these of the universal church?

3. Yet the recipient of so much honor was no more than a carpenter of Judea, so obscure that the dates of his birth and death are alike unknown, and his history can be learned only through a study of the life of the Saviour. He had the unique privilege of serving the Deity as guardian of His Son. He was master of the house of Nazareth, and for many years Jesus was known as his son. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" said the irritated villagers of Nazareth. In spite of the obscurity of his life, the church chose him as her patron, seeing no inconsistency in making him guardian of the church, who had been guardian of the church's Founder. In publicly celebrating his virtues and offices, she exhausts her splendors of ritual.

II. The Father and Patron.

1. In selecting a protector for His Son, it would have seemed more fitting to have chosen a prince of the earth, such as St. Louis was, or David, or Solomon in his youth; whose genius and power might have been at the service of the Saviour; yet the Eternal Father chose the carpenter, and scarcely removed him from his original obscurity in elevating him to his high position. It is evident that He chose a man already in love with those virtues and human conditions which were to be illustrated as the most excellent in the life of Jesus; a man who loved purity and chastity and union with God, obscurity, labor, prayer, humiliation, and poverty, and had chosen all these things as the best of life; a man who trusted absolutely to the providence of God and not at all to himself or his kind; who put God first, his brother

second, and himself last; and who in all things was just. He must have been a man before whom the angels could bow without shame, as did their King; to whom Mary could look up, as did her Son; in whom the Son of God found a companion as well as a guardian, whose death broke the mould which had fashioned him.

2. In the same manner of reasoning it would have seemed more fitting for the church to have chosen a great pope, the first one perhaps, or his companion, St. Paul, for the office of universal patron. No doctor ever had the right which St. Paul might have claimed to the honor and the title; because the mightiness of his faith and his intellect was such that the church will bear the impress of both until the end of time. St. John had claims also, and even St. Augustine; yet the church passes these saints by for the obscure carpenter of Nazareth. The reason is evident. The sanctity of St. Joseph matched the dignity of his office. Had not the Saviour taken the title of King of the Saints, his earthly guardian could claim it; a statement which could hardly be made of any other holy soul. In the hymn of his feast the church declares his superiority to all others in the comparison and the apostrophe of the last stanza but one: "Post mortem reliquos mors pia consecrat, palmamque emeritos gloria suscipit: tu vivens, Superis par, frueris Deo, mira sorte beatior."

III. The Thirty Years.

1. Naturally we ask what did the man do to merit these extraordinary honors from the church, which is Christian mankind. The conditions of his life fur-

nish the answer, and justify the absence of even the slim record which remains to us. He was the master of the home which sheltered Jesus for thirty years. It was the work of his hands, supported by his labor and care. It is impossible to dwell on the details of the home life of Joseph, without extraordinary emotion. The priests of the sanctuary are intimate with their Master, and carry His Sacred Body about in their ministrations, touch and receive It in the Mass; saints have had visions of the Child, have held Him in their loving arms; but what are such things to the privileges accorded St. Joseph? See the loving and continuous intimacy of the ordinary father and infant in a thousand homes. It is both sweet and touching, common as it is; and such was the hourly intimacy of Joseph with Jesus from the moment of his birth until his infancy had passed. It was a small thing for this carpenter to converse with the angels, having in his possession their King and Queen. Let us mention it with holy reverence and reticence, but who shall set limits to his intimacy with the Blessed Trinity, having in his possession as ward One of the Divine Persons. In fact the holiest imagination pauses before this man's relationship to God. It is too much for us.

2. It is perhaps as well to follow the Scripture and draw the veil over these intimacies, so overwhelming to human thought and littleness. But consider briefly the relations of this father and Son from the date of His young manhood until their separation. Whoever has had the privilege of witnessing father and son, superior in nature and attainments, grow old in affection for each other, ripen with the years

in mutual confidence and love while increasing in virtue, and drawing closer to each other as the thought of separation grows upon them, such a one will have a picture of the daily union of Jesus and Joseph in the home of Nazareth. It seems marvellous that any human being could have endured it; still more wonderful that having enjoyed it for thirty years, a man could have remained the mere clod that St. Joseph remains to the Protestant world. He must have reflected the Divine at the very least, as the senseless mirror reflects the sun.

3. He died in the arms of his Son, and saw the human tears fall from Jesus' eyes, heard his sobs as He resigned Himself to a separation, none the less painful to His human nature that He was God. The dying man could look without fear into his Son's face, could accept Mary's ministrations without reproach, for he had been the most faithful of guardians to the Mother and the Son. Perhaps his last petition was to remain with them until the tragedy of Calvary had passed; no other desire disturbed his union with the glorious will of God. Jesus received his last sigh, folded his dead hands on his breast, followed his holy body to the grave, and wept over his resting-place, services He did not render to His Blessed Mother. And it is easy to picture the two mourners, in the quiet and sorrow of the days when Joseph was no longer with them, talking with each other of the hundred things which had endeared him to them.

4. Without doubt his entrance into Limbo was as the ambassador of the Lord. From Adam no more distinguished soul had entered the prison of patience,

and he brought with him that news which no other could have brought, the news of speedy deliverance. With what wonder and joy the holy souls of men heard the story of his thirty years in the presence of Jesus. This man had seen, and held in his arms, and trained the Redeemer; he had but just left Him that moment; he could describe His appearance, His words, His history; and prophets heard with love and awe the fulfilment of their own prophecies; saints heard of Him Whom they had desired from the far-off centuries; and the parents of the race, the weak guardians of Paradise, listened in dread and hope to the description of the two beings, Jesus and Mary, whose perfection restored to earth the race in its first perfection, while the Divinity of Jesus honored it beyond description, and made these guilty two the progenitors of a Divine Man. What must have been the honor, reverence, and love heaped upon Joseph by these millions of holy ones, when they understood the height of glory to which God had raised him.

IV. His Earthly Fame.

1. It was morally impossible that the dignity and worth of such a man should remain hidden from men, when publicity is won by mere human genius. To grasp the strength and proportion of his fame and his use to his race, compare with his the worth and the fame of such a character as Napoleon or Cæsar, or their betters on honest grounds, Charlemagne and the Saxon Alfred. The former are but names to excite the less noble passions; the latter are known only to the learned, or to the average readers, touch-

ing actual life in almost accidental fashion. But this humble guardian of the Lord has his effigy on every altar, in church, school, home; his character is the inspiration of orator, poet, artist; his name honors the noblest temples and other public buildings; millions of pure and noble hearts or of weak and repentant ones, cry out to him daily in love and petition; all Christians regard him as the patron of their dying hours, and scarcely a faithful soul leaves the world without his sacred name on the lip, mingled with the names of Jesus and Mary. If God had conferred on him no other honor, this last would have been enough. Of all the great and good souls that have honored the earth with their virtues not one outside of the Holy Family has ever received so universal, so spontaneous a tribute of affection and esteem from the human race. The career of Napoleon living or dying and his kind is a mere stench to the human race; compared with the career of St. Joseph, the history of such leaders looks like a plague, to be remembered only with awe and horror, to be prayed against, as a crime against the human race.

2. Yet brilliant as is the place now held in public estimation by the carpenter of Nazareth, it has not reached its maturity. "Joseph is a growing son." It is more than probable that the Holy Family lives in heaven the same life which it lived on earth, and that the Mother and her Spouse rejoice in that completeness of nature which will be secured to all the just after the resurrection. It is not a doctrine of the church, but it is a favorite teaching with spiritual writers. The feast of the Assumption implicitly teaches that the Blessed Mother enjoys the privilege;

it seems fitting that the third member of the Nazareth household should be similarly honored.

What a lesson is this humble life of a Judean carpenter to the proud world. The honest and dishonest strivings of its greatest geniuses have not secured so beautiful, so true, so glorious, so enduring a fame as this obscure man, who lifted not his finger to secure any earthly glory. What a consolation his career must be to the common man, who has no hope of fame, or of being remembered any longer than his gravestone carries his epitaph, nor as long. To be remembered by God is the thing; to be blessed for years by the grateful prayers and thoughts of poor souls whom we have helped in body or soul is greater fame than the miserable glory which attaches to the names of Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon. The particular force of St. Joseph's life is that he was a faithful father, the model of fathers. Nothing less than his devotion to his family, his single-mindedness in their regard, his lofty standard of duty, his personal sanctity, will secure to the parent, not only the good sons of time but the immortal sons of eternity.

The Lenten Season.

What wilt thou that I do to thee? And he said, Lord, that I may see.—Luke xvii. 41

OUTLINE.

1. The celebration of Lent is a most effective and honest way to a right understanding of the tragedy of Calvary.
2. Fifty years ago Lent was ridiculed in this country as a superstition, while to-day it is held in respect.
3. To whom we are indebted for this change of public sentiment.
4. The best rule for the observance of Lent is to cut ourselves off from human affairs as far as we can.
5. If this seems difficult, picture the summary fashion in which sickness would remove them from our interest.
6. Examine in retirement the road of life so far travelled, and that part which is yet to come.
7. Cry out with the blind beggar for the mercy of light in the darkness of our souls.
8. How much we need light is plain from our confident belief that we already see plainly.
9. Lent is a happy time in which to ask and receive the light of the Holy Spirit.

1. Lent.

1. There is a touching fitness in the gospel selected for our edification on the Sunday before Lent. The Catholic world is about to enter on its preparation for the Passion of the Lord, to leave secular affairs for the space of forty days and join Our Saviour in the desert, to fit itself for a right understanding of its own destiny, and a right appreciation of the sublime tragedy which nailed the fairest flower of the human race to a cross. The wisdom of the church gives us this selection from the words and deeds of the Master, that we may catch the true meaning of the task

we are to perform. The celebration of Lent is a most effective and honest way to a right understanding of the tragedy of Calvary. In silence and humiliation, in sackcloth, ashes, and hunger, with all pleasures of sense laid aside, and the cares of life put away, bewailing the blindness which sent our King to a shameful death, the sins which made it possible, we travel slowly to the scene of our shame,—Calvary. The Gospel invites us. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concering the Son of Man shall be accomplished." The spirit of the blind man should be ours: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." His pitiful petition is the true prayer for Lent: "Lord, that I may see." The blindness of men is something to wonder at. We see it in our indifference to the tragedy of the Cross, which never comes home to us as a crime in which we have a share, or a disgrace which rests on our race.

2. In the civilized world to-day the Catholic body alone celebrates the Lenten season with spirit and thoroughness; for it alone is convinced to a degree of the necessity of penance. It alone seems to understand rightly the words of Christ: "Unless ye do penance, ye shall all likewise perish." It alone seems to have kept a right view of that crime against God and man perpetrated on Calvary. In the early days of the faith, the celebration of Lent was without system; each locality had its days of fast previous to the day of the crucifixion, and many had the commemoration of the Master's fast of forty days. Little by little, as the church grew, uniformity was introduced, and soon the entire Christian world was

in possession of the season of Lent as it is celebrated to-day. None disputed its fitness or its advantages until the Lutheran revolt, which, rejecting a few truths at the beginning, is about to end by rejecting all. In particular the public fasts and abstinences of the church became in time an object of popular ridicule, and even an argument against the church. Fifty years ago in this country the celebration of Lent was looked upon as a superstition. Yet what a change in public opinion at this date. The faithful Catholic millions, pluckily adhering to their Lenten practices, have brought the social and business world to respect their motives, and to make room for their celebration of Lent. It is well known now that the business world feels the presence of Lent as a time in which inventories can be made; the places of amusement reduce expenses to meet the falling off in attendance, fashionable society retires into a semi-obscurity, a half-retirement out of respect for the season; and the nation, in spite of itself, stands aside from its everlasting pursuit of money and pleasure, while the Catholic is at his prayers and fastings.

3. Strangely enough this Lenten period of silence, rest, thoughtfulness, and abstinence has received the unqualified approval of physicians without any religious belief. They see in it a chance of rest for minds and bodies worn out with surfeiting, with emotion and passion, which will not benefit by treatment as long as they are subjected to the strain of fast living. These physicians encourage their Catholic patients to take advantage of Lent for its physical benefits, and praise the season for their non-Catholic patients, advising them also to imitate its withdrawal from

secular affairs. Thus approved by scientists, accepted by the fashionable world, and acknowledged by business circles, Lent has come to be an immense social influence in this country. To whom are we indebted for this surprising change in public sentiment? Surely not to the cool-faithed Catholics, who are ever paring the practices and doctrines of the faith to suit the circumstances of the hour, and the prejudices of their non-Catholic friends; nor yet to the Catholics who become invalids of the most desperate sort just before Lent; nor to the many who pass through the season with such thought of its spirit and as great knowledge of its aim as Hottentots? Rather are we indebted, for the present national deference to Lent, to the faithful souls of every grade of life, who did their duty as it came to them with the one thought of honoring the Master by obedience to His church.

II. The Way to Observe Lent.

1. In order to use this holy season to advantage bear in mind that it has been instituted to help us toward that freedom from the slavery of the body which too great an interest in business, money-making, pleasure, comfort, no matter how lawful, is sure to impose. We are born for a spiritual world, as well as for this, and the heavenly life is the better. In Lent we cut ourselves loose from this world, and whether we are able to fast and abstain, this cutting off is possible and necessary. It makes the body once more the slave where for ten months it has played the master. It gives us the right view of

things; and we see ourselves in some measure as we shall see ourselves after death when this world will be far from us. The best rule for the observance of Lent is, therefore, to cut ourselves off from human affairs as far as we can; to transact them as if they were the affairs of a stranger, or as if fatal sickness had attacked us, and in a few months they would be out of our hands altogether, as one day they will surely be.

2. If this seems difficult either to the will or the imagination, picture to yourself the manner in which these same affairs would worry along while a serious illness confined you for months to the sick-room. We are all apt to imagine that the world, at least our corner of it, could not get along without our supervision; a mere glance at the children, the estates of persons dead a few years, or still on the sick list, makes plain our conceit. In the same way we are given to fancying that fast and abstinence are impossible for us; another glance at the slender eating of the poor and their vigorous health, at the good results of well-ruled abstinence in bodies which have ceased to grow, will show our mean attempts at self-deception, the one art in which man is a master without previous training.

3. Yet if it be true that fasting and abstinence are impossible for us, the spirit of Lent is a thing to be observed, and penance is a duty which cannot be shirked. There are two penances which ought to be specially cultivated in Lent. The first is a more than ordinary devotion to the duties of our state. To watch and examine ourselves as to the spirit and manner in which we are doing things that have be-

come a second nature to us, perhaps, is a task of magnitude, and of penitential merit; to stand aside like a curious observer determined to find fault, never to approve, and in that spirit to note each move of mind and will, each resulting act; to question motives, to denounce flattery to ourselves by ourselves: what a true and penitential occupation for Lent! With our actions and intentions brought daily before the bar of judgment, as they will surely one day be, what discoveries of faithless or foolish parents would result, of mean children, who thought themselves models of filial love, of cold Catholics who mistook lack of faith for equanimity of feeling, of vicious dispositions which thought themselves honorably severe, of malice which talked like charity, of hypocrisy cloaked by respectability.

4. The second penance is to examine that road which so far we have travelled between birth and judgment, and in particular to study the portion which is still ahead. Recall the souls that began the journey with us. The man of twenty can easily find some sorrowful tragedies among them; the jail has closed on one or two, and everlasting shame; unhonored and sinful exit from this world has disgraced another; a third has fallen from faith, or from its practice; many have gone home in peace and virtue; yet he is still here, healthy, happy, virtuous, with a career of honor ahead, no stain upon his name or his soul. How much longer will these advantages remain to him? Who can tell, when the most prosperous, the most virtuous suddenly tumble into ruin of one kind or another!

III. The Blind Beggar.

1. The ease with which we sin, the difficulty with which we come to a real repentance, alike spring from unconsciousness of the misery sin brings upon the soul. We cannot cry out with the anguish of the blind beggar, Son of David, have mercy on us. He knew his own wretchedness, he had suffered it for a lifetime, and the whole world could not silence the cry for mercy that rose like a tornado from his heart, when he found himself so close to the One Being able and willing to remove or lighten human misery. The respectable people nearest him appealed to his human respect to force him to be silent, and yet he only cried out the more; had Rome's emperor at the head of an army ordered him to silence he would still have cried out for pity, so deep was the sense of his own misery in his heart.

The Son of God made way for him, and granted the most touching and pitiful petition ever presented to Him: "Lord, that I may see." Look into the depths of that long-nursed anguish, sadder even than the physical darkness in which the beggar had sat for years, and hear in that cry for mercy and light the great cry that has gone up from the nations sitting in darkness since man appeared on the earth. Its strength and yearning are beyond description. It was easy for the bystanders to chide his insistence; they had never been blind. If we could feel our blindness as he felt his, what a cry for mercy would reach the Master, and how quickly He would respond to the appeal. Alas! we too often think our blindness sound sight, and instead of prayer for light, we

have only congratulations for ourselves on our clear seeing, or foolish praise for God that such sight is His gift!

2. In this very gospel we have a striking example of the blindness of men. The disciples, as the intimates of the Saviour, thought that little was wanting to them in the way of comprehending Him. They could even reproach the beggar that he troubled the Lord for sight instead of being content with his condition as they were. They knew it all; yet only a short time previous they had been guilty of a blindness which to us appears culpable. When the Saviour announced to them His coming passion, and in the plainest language, fit for infants, told them that He was to be crucified and after His death to rise again, no understanding of the facts reached them. "And they understood none of these things." Yet in their conceit they could reprove the insistent beggar. If these princes of the earth and of heaven, these pupils of Christ, His dear associates on the mission, could be so blind, what cannot happen to ourselves? What may not be the depths of that darkness in which we have hidden ourselves from ourselves, while stupidly calling it light?

3. We see this blindness all about us. Here is an industrious and sober man, who drinks without drunkenness enough of his small wages to stint the house in necessities, to deprive the children of decent clothing, to force them to work too early in life. Here is a rich man who gives to the poor one-tenth of what he is able and ought to give, and congratulates himself on his generosity. Here is a youth who misses no external law of the church, and is eaten up

by the dry rot of impurity because dry rot is thought little of in society; it is cancer which is dreaded. This woman frequents the sacraments and misses no chance to spread the tale which injures a reputation; another is so bent on securing a footing in society for her boys and girls as to be utterly unaware they are losing faith and virtue in that society. And these instances might be multiplied without end. The power of self-deception belonging to man is very great. Hence the fitness of that petition for Lent: "Lord, that I may see."

Death.

It is appointed unto men once to die.—Heb. ix. 27.

By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death.—Rom. v. 12.

OUTLINE.

1. The human race forever wrestles with the mysterious problem of death.
2. The pagan thinks it solved when he has schooled himself to accept death with indifference.
3. Yet this solution brings him no alleviation of the anguish of death.
4. Sinners are compelled to create their own philosophy of death.
5. But it is never as dignified or consistent as the pagan's.
6. In the agony of death none so religious in form as the sinner.
7. The true and devout Christian accepts death as the punishment of sin.
8. Serene he treads the path to death because Jesus and the saints trod it before him.
9. For him the light of the resurrection shines ever on the grave.

I. The Problem of Death.

1. Man has some understanding of the problem of life. The work in which he is engaged, the hopes and ambitions which he cherishes, the pleasant relations with neighbors, friends, and kinsfolk are tangible and comprehensible things; but death, the cessation of work, of hope and ambition, of all relationship with earth, has been a problem from the beginning, and for the natural man remains a mystery to the end. Men have argued over its solution for centuries, have adored it, flouted it, reverenced and mocked it by turns; they have tried to destroy it by such doctrines as transmigration, or to let it alone as an indifferent fact of nature like the change of seasons; they have tried to take it gayly like the Epicureans,

making it the excuse for greater merriment in life; or they have endeavored with the modern scientists to explain it as one of nature's happy processes, to which we should submit resignedly as to the winter. But all these wandering moods have not solved the mystery of death, or brought consolation and resignation to a single creature in the presence of the dread messenger. Men still wrestle with the problem, and continue to shape their lives or their plans with the dread fact in view. In spite of philosophers the problem remains a problem still. "Have the gates of death been opened to thee, and hast thou seen the darksome doors?" Job xxxviii.

2. In our day the cultured pagan has made a vigorous attempt to treat it as a natural and poetic fact, which should have no other influence on our lives than that which urges us to keep our estates in order for our heirs. He reasons that as man knows nothing about it after centuries of argument and research, therefore there is nothing to be learned of its nature; that since God sent us into the world without our own knowledge or consent, He will discharge us from it in the same way; that it is not for us to worry over what does not concern us. He denounces the preachers of death's sorrows as disturbers of man's happiness, making death a bitter dolor where it should be a passing into rest; he asks ironically where these preachers got their information as to judgment and the account to be rendered of this life; and he conveniently forgets all that has been taught of that account and the life hereafter by the sages of human history. Admitting the fact of death he teaches that life should be made all the more beautiful because of

the fact, that dying should be done graciously and bravely, "like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams," that the hobgoblins of sin and judgment should not be permitted to disturb the death-moment, that roses should be scattered over the dead body and over the grave, gracious marbles should mark the resting-place, and sweet memories of the loved and lost should linger in the memory forever.

3. This philosophy makes beautiful reading, but it can be doubted if it ever eased one pang of the dying moment for either philosopher or slave. Even without the dread of judgment and hell, death remains a dreadful thing. It is not the agony of dying which affrights the soul, nor the farewell to fortune, nor the entrance to corruption; but rather the cessation of life, the eternal separation from all we loved, and the surrender of every hope and ambition that so long fed the fires of the heart. The pagan cannot hide this great anguish of separation from our own personality under rhetoric and roses, marbles and memories. If he has loved deeply, the death of his beloved reduces him to the most piteous despair, and resignation is beyond him. Memory mocks him, for that which he loved is extinct, a mere handful of ashes, which it seems folly to keep in the heart. "Suffer me, therefore, that I may lament my sorrow a little, before I go and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death; a land of misery and darkness where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." —Job x.

"O Death! how bitter is the remembrance of thee

to a man that hath peace in his possessions."—Ecclus. xli.

II.—Sinners and Death.

1. For Christians who have taken to a life of sin death has no secrets, since they are acquainted with the teachings of the Church on the end of man's career in this world. However, as man must render to himself regularly an account of the use he is making of life, sinners are compelled to have a philosophy of death even as the pagan's, which will explain and condone their constant violation of the laws of God. They still believe, and are not willing to lose their faith; they are certain of the punishment of sin, of judgment, purgatory, and hell; and the grace of fear still holds their hearts, and often poisons the pleasure for which they have risked their happiness hereafter, their peace of mind here. They may have sunk so low, may have acquired so strong an attachment to sin, as to wish that death were the end of all things for them, and that faith, religion, commandments had never existed for men. Yet in spite of the paralysis which they have brought on the soul, they still believe in the life to come, still hope to give up sin one day when the appetite for it has died out. They forget the wise man's saying: "Remember that death is not slow."—Ecclus. xiv.

2. The pagan endeavors to forget death; the believing sinner plans to cheat the law and its officers at the last moment. He counts first on the vigor of his constitution to carry him into old age, and second on the placidity of his passions when youth and maturity have departed. He supposes that in the de-

cline of life his temper will incline to religion and its duties, and that he will have time to make a long preparation. He pleads that the passions of youth are so strong as to require an outlet, and as long as he does wrong to no man that in some way indulgence is lawful to him. He soothes his loose conscience with the promise that he will soon repent, or with regular attendance at Mass, or with the wearing of a scapular or the recitation of the rosary or the giving of generous alms. At times the grace of fear becomes so insistent that these and similar sedatives refuse to control conscience, and he is forced to make a mission, or to make a confession which results in good behavior for a brief time. Then he returns to his sins again. His philosophy is not as consistent, nor as admirable as the pagan's, but it serves sinners for many years, as a powerful opiate serves unfortunates dying from slow and painful disease.

3. When death comes to the pagan he makes a bold and often a successful attempt to lie down with dignity to cheerful dreams; while the sinner against light sneaks off meanly like a "quarry-slave at night, scourged to his dungeon." He is like one rushed out to trial and execution before his affairs can be settled, his counsel summoned, his witnesses secured, his case prepared. He hopes against hope for that luck which, in spite of the decree of physicians, will return him to active life once more; he clings to the priest, to the crucifix, to the scapular, to the lighted candle, to the holy water, no aged devotee being able to surpass his devotion to these little planks, which relieve his ever-increasing sensation of drowning. But his devotion has no heart in it, and is only the

expression of his despair. There may be some dignity in the death of a pagan; there seems to be only meanness in the death of a sinner, unless grace has flowed in upon his soul in a flood, and floated him above the meanness of his life. "By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented."—Wis. xi.

III.—The Sanctified and Death.

1. The vagaries of both pagan and sinner in this matter spring from their poor understanding of the mystery of death, which only the true Christian comprehends rightly, and gives its proper place in his philosophy of life. He has it from the Holy Spirit that death is the punishment of sin; for by sin came death into the world. Therefore he accepts it as a punishment, which falls inexorably on every son of Adam, sinner and saint alike. All must accept its anguish, as did Christ and His holy ones, and thereby pay off a portion of the debt of justice, which Christ by His death paid wholly. He holds that of all life's days the last is the most important, as in the race-course the goal takes first place in the minds of athletes and spectators. In one respect life is a training for death, that the soul may pass the finishing-post with its every power in vigorous action. Like a practical philosopher he believes in preparing first and always for that which must be; therefore death is a well-considered element in all his daily calculations. Nor is it in consequence a spectre at the feast, a shadow on life's pathway; for it looms before him grand and majestic, the portal to the eternal life, the gloom of its earthward side softened by the light of

heaven. Hence when life has honored him with its best gifts, and has little more to give, a certain indifference to living longer, a noble disregard of our puny, physical life takes possession of him, and he finds himself longing, as do the saints always, for the true life of heaven. "One day in thy courts is above a thousand."—Psalm lxxxiii.

2. At the same time he does not try to hide under roses and rhythms the terrors of death. The man of faith is always acutely alive to the ordeal which he must undergo in his last moments, too sensitive perhaps to its anguish. The very strength of his body in health reminds how feeble, how tormented, how painful that body will become in the grasp of fatal disease; how fever will consume it, and pain oppress it; how dreadful will become the bed so eagerly sought in health after the day's labors. He is chilled now at the thought of the grave and its painful corruption, though his body will be insensible to the worm. His sins, long repented of, trouble him, as he catches sight of the majesty of an offended God. The judgment has many terrors for him, because it has terrified the spotless saints after their lives of labor and deaths of love. More than all, the separation from his beloved, the parting with those who are far dearer than life, will be a second death to him. It drew bitter tears and groans from the Son of God, that separation from the best of life; why should it not rend the heart of the ordinary Christian dying? These and a hundred other sorrows often overpower for the moment the most fervent and innocent soul. "My tongue hath cleaved to my jaws, and Thou hast brought me down into the dust of death.—Ps. xxi.

3. With the just man the consolations of faith finally outweigh the apprehensions of the mind. He recalls how faithfully he has striven to walk in the way of the commandments, to prepare himself by a pure and devoted life for the final ordeal. How often has he meditated on death, accepted its pains beforehand with resignation to the Divine will, and poured out his petitions for fidelity to the end. "Remember thy last end and thou wilt never sin," has been his motto. He is consoled by recalling that Jesus did not spare Himself the bitter journey to the grave by way of awful Calvary, that tender martyrs followed their Lord by the road of fire, of torture, of the bloody arena, that the glorious bodies of the saints underwent the humiliations of the grave in crumbling into dust, and that the God, in whose hands are all these things, will watch each detail, as He watches the fall of a sparrow. "Are not ye of much more value than they?" He knows that a splendid strength will be conferred upon him by the sacraments of the last hour; the Son of God Himself will feed him, the priest will absolve him, the church load him with her favors; the last oiling, the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, will warm the chilling heart and strengthen the faltering limbs for the journey through the valley of shadows; and at his side will walk his angel, his patrons, to cheer the lonely way. Though it is the Judge he meets at the great tribunal, he recalls that in life He had ever been his friend, bound to him by many ties, but most of all by the tried service he had rendered to His Master on many occasions. "I was hungry and ye fed me, naked and ye clothed Me." That painful separation from his beloved on earth is

only for a short time; and if he cannot repress his anguish and fear that they will not do as well without him, nor be as faithful to God, his trust in His Master quells both fear and anguish. Finally, he knows that the Church will lay his body to rest with reverence as once the temple of the Holy Ghost, and guard it with care for the resurrection. It will be laid away with honor, and its name held in benediction. With all these beautiful consolations in his mind, how can the death of the Christian be other than it is, simple, sweet, enlightened, pathetic, and hopeful? The pagan stoic fails like a lamp extinguished or drops with the dumb resignation of a noble animal struck by a blow he cannot understand nor resist; the Christian departs like another Columbus into the great unknown, confident of finding another and more glorious world. The dawn of an eternal day sheds its light on his paling face, and if we who survive must weep, it is because the doors of death have shut him from our human sight forever, and to see him again we must travel the road by which he departed. But the light of the resurrection shines ever on his grave. "O Death, where is thy victory! O Death, where is thy sting!"—1 Cor. xv. 55.

The Final Account.

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.—Matt. xii. 36.

OUTLINE.

1. There should be no exaggeration in descriptions of a fact so solemn and inevitable as the judgment.
2. In that moment we shall meet our souls, as it were for the first time.
3. The personages of the scene alone are sufficient to fill us with reverence and dread.
4. Yet they do not constitute the chief dread of judgment, which is that now we are to get justice done us.
5. To understand this more clearly, picture Augustine and Napoleon at judgment.
6. The judgment-hour ought to be the home-coming of sons, whereas it is too often the trial of mean malefactors.
7. The world always ridicules the doctrine of the final account.
8. But in spite of its ridicule men continue to hope and believe in a final balancing of the innumerable and insolent injustices of this world.
9. How we may use this doctrine to the best advantage.

I.—The Judgment Alone Terrible.

1. Compared with sickness and death, the last account which man must render of himself to God has superior terrors; yet sickness is painful, to be in its fatal grasp without hope of escape rends the heart, and death, cessation, departure is the dread of nature; still, the thought of passing before the throne for sentence surpasses in anguish many sicknesses, many deaths. This is the moment chosen by God to justify Himself to man for the mystery which has surrounded His providence in the world, and to secure man's assent to the decision of the Judge in

man's own case. It is the marvel of this judgment that man himself accepts the sentence as just. No matter how stupid in life, at his own trial he enjoys the wit of the immortals, and can see and ratify the conclusions of his own life as they appear at this moment. Believers, therefore, need every encouragement in descriptions of this tremendous event, so certain, so perfect, so irrevocable. Exaggeration, inference, word-painting are mostly uncalled for; because when the least has been said, which the words of the Master authorize and the teachings of the Church as well, enough has been told to disturb men seriously. Cardinal Newman did us inestimable service when he wrote his consoling "Dream of Gerontius," a true antidote for the horrifying descriptions of the judgment so often indulged in by the imprudent.

2. At the same time there should be no minimizing of the fact itself. Sickness, death, and judgment are made bearable to the just and the penitent by the grace of God, and they can look with holy trust upon the approach of these trials. No human being can escape them; in judgment we must answer for our use of the talents intrusted to us; and we have the declaration of Christ that we shall account even for our idlest words. It is well for us to know without excess or diminution what we are to meet in that hour. A sentence is to be pronounced, and we have the shaping of the sentence. Therefore, in brief, the details of this last event will take form from the matter of examination and the manner of it. As to the latter, how strange and awesome are the circumstances? Just dispossessed of our earthly tenement,

we meet for the first time, as it were, our own souls on the borders of eternity, the better part of our human nature, yet always the least known and understood. Little in time, insignificant members of human society, we are in a moment immortals; mean in our mental capacity and disposition, suddenly we are become generous in both; self-deceivers while on earth, our candor now is simply appalling. We see sin, error, truth, justice naked, which in mortal life were constantly dressed in our prejudices; and we now give them their right names in love or in horror.

3. We enter the great hall of judgment made wonderful by all the human glories and infamies that entered it ahead of us. We who trembled like slaves on being dragged before earthly courts stand now at the dread bar which passed sentence on Homer, Augustus, Virgil, Peter, Augustine. The Father and the son meet face to face for the first time; their relationship is evident to all in the likeness of the son to the Father; a likeness which shines out through all deformities of evil. The Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, holds the seat of judgment, and the witnesses stand in that August Presence ready with their testimony. They are incorruptible and eager; the Angel that guarded us all our lives, Satan that desired us, the souls injured by our sins, perhaps lost through our deficiencies, that now demand compensation and justice. What need to add anything to this plain statement of facts. The bravest and purest soul sighs with emotion at the baldest description of the scene.

II.—We Shall Get Justice.

1. Yet it is not the personages of judgment that constitute its dread. We are in constant spiritual communication with them during our lives; and when we have put on immortality, to see them may not so seriously disturb us. The chief dread of that hour will be the fact that here we are to receive justice. We have ever been ready to mete it to others, we have cried to heaven for it many a time against our persecutors, yet it is certain we shall not be so eager for it in God's visible presence. We have never understood perfect justice. Our sins may have been known to us, and their malice atoned for by many tears and severe penances; but how many meditate upon the unseen consequences of these sins, or even dream that sins have consequences? The father who neglected his children, maimed their career by his failures; the sensualist whose graceful obscenity started the young upon the road of pleasure; the teacher whose love of ease cost many souls their faith or virtue; the author whose gay book led many into less esteem for truth and purity; all will find that many generations must pass before the consequences of their injustice have passed from the earth. We must suffer for these consequences; justice demands it, and at this tribunal justice will be satisfied. Yet it is mercy which we need more than justice, we count upon mercy to carry us beyond the danger of hell; but if Satan and the witnesses against us, the unfortunates who trace the source of their misfortunes to us, can make a clear case against us, what mercy can

save? "I will take a time, and I will judge justices," is the declaration of the Spirit.

2. To understand this better be present in mind at the judgment of two historical personages: Augustine and Napoleon. One was a saint, whose life at the beginning was more or less sinful or indifferent, while its maturity and close were splendid in virtue and services to God and man; the other was a tremendous military genius and leader of men, over whom religion and principle had small influence. Both have left upon the world impressions which may never fade. Yet their greatness made their judgment only the more searching and severe. How insignificant were those two souls with all their genius beside the majesty of angelic intelligence or the power of Satan! The Prince of darkness might have been discouraged before the magnitude of Augustine's repentance, yet he still had the years of his heresy and sin. In the great emperor he had a splendid case, which no repentance would seem to overcome; his personal sins, his monstrous ambition, his unnecessary wars, his cruelties and his lust, the awful miseries which his career poured upon Europe. What height of human genius and power could match the far-reaching consequences of his sins?

3. Such men have much to offer in excuse at judgment, but we have nothing. No great temptation disturbed us, no powerful allurements drew us from the right way. We sinned because we desired the taste of sin, wantonly. Judgment was not made simply to be a terror to us; it was meant to be the moment of public acknowledgment of our fidelity. It ought really to be the homecoming of sons from a noble

war, crowned with everlasting and bloodless honor, whose Captain presents them with joy to the Eternal King, and asks for them approval and a share in the great kingdom; whose scars are honorable, even though evidencing human weakness, the moments of half-yielding to the foe! Alas! what an array of skulkers, cowards, weaklings, traitors passes before that throne; what joy to Satan as their careers are laid bare, what shame to the Great Captain who trusted and endowed them, only to pass shameful judgment on them now.

III.—The World Ridicules.

1. Whatever may have been the design of God in establishing the seat of judgment, the busy and pleasure-loving world ridicules the doctrine, or does its best to diminish its significance for man. Neither the private nor the general judgment disturbs it in the pursuit of money and sin, and it meets the cry of the preachers and the warnings of the Saviour with a shrug of the shoulder, saying, These things are still far-off. It will not permit itself to get a clear impression, natural or supernatural, of the final account. It dare not; for with the impression would tumble like a house of cards that fine structure of daily wickedness which it is forever building and embellishing. The world must have irresponsible power. It cannot bear the idea of one day accounting for each atom of time and grace. Kings must still be gods, as they were of old, though the name of divinity be gone; ministers must own standing armies with which to carry out their picayune policies,

though the people starve and corruption thrives; financiers, as they are called, must be at liberty to manipulate railroads, to organize trusts, to steal the earth; the seducer, the swindler, the voluptuary would not enjoy their pursuits and rewards with the idea of an accounting lodged in their minds. So, the world acts as if no past would ever rise to meet it with exact details of its sins; it boldly declares that in this world force, fraud, craft, money, are the true rulers, and God does not interfere to prevent their injustices, as is seen in the fact that every species of wrong marks the history of the nations.

2. This scepticism no doubt weakens our faith, but it has not yet succeeded in destroying the belief of mankind in the day of settlement. No sane soul could stand over the corpse of John the Baptist and admit that the injustice of his death is to have no other vengeance than the luxurious career and ordinary ending permitted to Herod Antipas; or admit that all these mysteries of God's providence are never to have explanation. Such an ending to man's history shocks reason in the mere mention. Religion or not, men will believe in their hearts that the devil-parent whose children died criminals because of him, the devil-king whose subjects died amid war's horrid miseries for his pleasure, and the whole tribe of malicious sinners will one day somewhere have meted out to them in generous measure every pang they inflicted on their victims. Justice demands it, and human reason approves.

3. It is certain that the judgment has three uses: to vindicate God's providence to each man, to bestow on man true justice, to determine his reward or pun-

ishment. But these things are of eternity. Its use here is to teach us the importance of our own actions, and to set us on strict guard over them. Not a hair of our heads drops to the ground without the permission and knowledge of God, who knows our most secret thoughts and actions. What an inspiration to the good that each minute of labor and patience is to be recognized by Him; what a deterrent to willing sinners that every shade of intention and resolution in their violation of the law shall one day stand up to accuse them! Sinner and saint alike will see their entire lives with the eye of the Divinity, as clear as a map through all their years, with consequences running far into time and eternity. Both the elect and the condemned will stand for an instant beside the Judge, and with immortal intelligence look into the present mystery of God's dealings with men; and they will admit His justice, wisdom, and mercy from the beginning, though for one the result of life has been eternal condemnation.

Heaven.

But as it is written: the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.—1 Cor. ii. 9.

OUTLINE.

1. The civilized world is slowly dividing into two camps: the believers in the immortality of man, and the unbelievers.
2. In spite of the teachings of the latter men still refuse to feel and think as animals.
3. Yet many, while believing in a life to come, are entirely dominated by the life of this world.
4. And the ideas of death, judgment, and hell are more potent in their lives than heaven.
5. The true idea of heaven and the joys and activities of heaven.
6. It is the perfection of the life begun here, the resurrection and renewal of it.
7. The testimonies of the New Testament are very clear and consoling on this matter.
8. If heaven has little or no influence on our lives, it is because we are not certain of its existence.
9. Did not death so often take from us our best beloved, our thoughts would rarely turn toward our last home.

I.—The Crown of Life.

1. In religious matters two hostile camps now face one another on the great battle-field of the world. On one side are the sinners and certain scientists, on the other the followers of Christ. The former declare their disbelief in a future career for man outside of this world, the sinners through self-interest, the scientists through gratuitous assumption. The Christians base their lives on the eternity of heaven and hell, and look to a career of perfect happiness in heaven with the God who made them. Grouped around these two camps is that great multitude of sincere, right-living people who know not what to be-

lieve in the clamor of discussion going on around them. The scientists declare that there exists no evidence of an eternal world other than our own, which may be eternal, even if man is not; that the ingrained superstition of men, and the shrewdness of selfish priesthoods, have joined forces to proclaim and maintain a delusive and foolish hope, beautiful in conception, and sublime in expression, but so utterly without reality as to be the source of many miseries to man. The sinners support the scientists with enthusiasm because the existence of another world means eternal death to them. The Christians continue to teach the glory of heaven, convinced by faith and by reason also that the end of man's career is not in this world. The two camps will one day go out against each other in pitched battle, and not for the first time, as this struggle has been from the beginning.

2. It is quite possible that God might have made man what the scientists think he is, simply the highest form of animal life, made to enjoy the earth for a little time, and then like the inferior animals to be returned to his native dust; in which case the resemblance of man to the most intelligent beast would have been much closer than it appears at present. Man would have lived and died content to be merely an animal. His personal comfort would have been his highest ambition, and, his wants and pleasures satisfied, he would hardly have worn himself out with mental sorrows over a condition of life possibly higher than his own. Sickness and death would not have had such prospective terrors for him as now, and the parting at the grave would not sadden the last moments of the dying nor cast so deep a gloom over

the lives of surviving friends. The poet and the artist and the sculptor, the architect, the statesman, the warrior, might have enjoyed their careers as in the present hour, but without so much anxiety and labor in the severe effort to attain eminence, and without bitter disappointment if only moderate success or absolute failure greeted their efforts. However, in spite of the sinners and the scientists men continue to act as if there ought to be a life to come. They grieve immoderately over their sick and dead, instead of cultivating the happy stoicism and indifference of the animal; the fire within them urges them on to the most heroic labors in behalf of art, commerce, literature, and charity; and when they accept the teachings of the scientists, it is with the apathy of despair; or with a kind of madness, which secretly curses the fate that gave them existence without a motive sufficient to make life pleasurable, sickness and failure indifferent matters, and death the pleasant end of something worth ending.

3. Catholics, strong in the faith of eternal life, regard these unfortunates with pitying eye. For them there can never be but the one camp, where Jesus is the Captain and heaven is the veteran's prize; and life always remains sweet and hopeful to them, even in the darkest hours, because earth is only the stepping-stone to that kingdom, of whose glory there shall never be an end. Yet even Catholics can be criticised very often for the little use they make of their belief in heaven to comfort their weary moments, and to lighten the burdens of life. In the average Christian life you will find that death, judgment, and hell play a larger part in moulding or di-

recting the soul than heaven. Men seem to be most quickly, if not most powerfully, influenced by fear, not love, though this be strongest in the long run. The honest life of the world, for here we are not speaking of sinners, too often so dominates souls, that the thought of heaven is repellent, since it involves the pain of separation from earthly activities. Success in life urges most men to put away such disagreeable thoughts as death; but, what is stranger, it removes the idea of heaven as well, and men can wade long in suffering, in adversity, in sorrow, in bad fortune, without once taking actual comfort in the sweet thought of heaven. It was St. Paul's great consolation in his last days that "as for the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day; and not only to me, but to them also that love his coming."—2 Tim. iv.

II.—Heaven as It Is.

1. We do not take more comfort and happiness out of the thought of heaven because our ideas of that dwelling-place of angels and saints are dry and therefore unfruitful. It does not require much imagination or wide reading to get emphatic perceptions of death, judgment, and hell; we are too keen on these matters, and must even repress our wayward fancy in their regard. Heaven is all that an ideal earth might be, and very much more. What are the natural desires of the innocent and high-minded of this world as to their own happiness? We all desire youth, that beautiful period when the color of life is so rich and strong that sorrow and separation seem

but distant shadows; we desire health and vigor, that we may enjoy life, and contribute our share to the joy of others; we long for riches, because so much of material beauty can be purchased by gold, and because want is painful; we yearn for fixity in the persons, places, things we love, for they are necessary to happiness, and to lose them means sorrow; we long to remain constantly with our beloved, to enjoy their company, to strengthen more and more the bonds of love between us; and as our souls grow holier there rises within us an intense longing for nobler circumstances than those in which we live.

2. Does this world grant us these things? Youth flies with astonishing speed, and leaves us on life's road wrinkled, gray-headed, rheumatic, somewhat crabbed in temper, and utterly stripped of the vivacity and the illusions of youth; death seems but a little ways off, and is the bitter seasoning of every banquet. In place of health and vigor we are reminded that the surplus of these is gone, and that we must husband what is left, if we would live to middle age. Most of us not only remain poor, but feel at times the cold shadow of actual want; it is only the few who enjoy sufficient incomes. The fact which causes us most pain and astonishment is the utter uncertainty of the shifty world about us; in ten years the panorama of our lives changes completely; hardly a soul we knew at life's start remains near us, and in twenty years change has not only robbed us of youth and hope and illusion, but has also taken the friends of childhood and youth, and placed us in an entirely new and more chilling set of circumstances. Worse yet, death and other fatalities have cut off from us the beloved of

our hearts, and our best past lies beneath the churchyard mould. If we have been fortunate, new and holy relationships have taken root in us to ease the wounds of time; none the less are they wounds, and at times we must stand apart and weep to be alone in the world. In place of the illusions of our youth has come a bitter sense of the meanness of men, which pesters and worries us like the winged nuisances of a new-opened wilderness. Lying, cheating, slandering, dishonesty of all kinds, envy, hypocrisy, polite obscenity, sham, fraud, unfaith, so crowd upon the decent and clean that they begin to feel unclean themselves; but there is no escape from the wilderness.

3. Such are our desires, and such is the world's response to them. Is it not strange, then, that we should not turn with ardent longing to the thought of that heaven which is our only refuge from the world's meanness, the sure fulfilment of the desires which God has placed in our hearts? Heaven will give us eternal youth, health, vigor, wealth, beauty; it will be without change, or shadow of death and separation; we shall there find again our beloved, and the past and future shall be one with the present; all the beauty of earth, intensified a thousand times and made eternal, will be ours. In fact, heaven means the resurrection and rehabilitation of the human race after death, except for that part of it which has been lost of its own will. The angels and saints shall live in a perfect society under the King of men and angels, and joy shall have no end. How is it, then, that with this splendid home awaiting us, we spend so little thought upon it? Simply because we are ignorant of

the beauties of God's dwelling-place. Ignorant of heaven's beauty, we neither consider nor desire it.

III.—The Divine Word.

1. Let us hear what the Scriptures have to say about heaven. Here is the description given by St. John in the last chapters of the Apocalypse: "And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people, and God himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. . . . And he shewed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper-stone, even as crystal. . . . And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper-stone; but the city itself pure gold, like to clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. . . . And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the nations shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day: for there shall be no night there. . . . And there shall be no

curse any more: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face: and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

2. What can be added to this clear and shining testimony except the words of the Master Himself. "Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life."—John v. 28, 29. "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they that shall be accounted worthy of that world, and of the resurrection from the dead, shall neither be married, nor take wives. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.—Luke xx. 34–36. "In my Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you, that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be." These direct testimonies from Our Lord might be multiplied beyond limit. What hope and joy ought they not rouse in our hearts! Yet we are sceptical of the heaven in which we must believe. It is too beautiful, too wonderful to be true; so we bury ourselves in the business, the physical, mental, and social joys of life, to distract our weary souls from the thoughts of death; we pile up fortunes, grow greedy of human fame; and

when the moments of gloom arrive, as come they must to every man, no ray of heaven's glorious light pierces our darkness. We sicken and die, half despairing of the life to come, half hopeful, and almost wholly ignorant.

3. Therefore, Christ reminds us by the death of our nearest and best beloved that we have an everlasting home visible to the eyes of faith, and forces us to look for it through the mist of our tears, when our hearts are breaking. We kneel at the grave where our treasures lie, we beat against that awful barrier of death, we cry out that it is impossible they should be gone from us forever; and out of the depths of human grief rises the light of that faith which we have let die in our souls; and we see at last the brightness and truth of heaven, and its peace and promise heal our griefs. But why wait for life's tragedies to force heaven's consolations upon us? Why not recognize it now, this home of the blest, and draw from it comfort for moments of sorrow, humility for moments of pride, strength in temptation, hope in despair, and joy for every instant of life. The world is all the sweeter, and its dark hours are lit up, when men remember and constantly feel that the greatest joy of life on earth is its continuity in the glorious life to come.

Everlasting Failure.

Then shall he say to the wicked: Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire.—Matt. xxv. 46.

OUTLINE.

1. The failures met with in this life are a hint of the failures to be met with in eternity.
2. Thus the existence of hell can be surmised, even if the Church had not declared it.
3. But Christ did not leave us in doubt on this matter, and openly described for us hell and its eternity.
4. Men have argued against its existence, or against its eternity of pain.
5. Common-sense teaches that if men can make shipwreck of this life, they can do as much with the life to come.
6. Theologians have been willing to do away with the darker features of hell, but have found all things against them.
7. Lurid descriptions of this place of sorrow are useless and hurtful.
8. The dignity of the description of hell given by Christ in the parable of the rich man.
9. He Himself shows us that God and man do not lose in the home of eternal justice the dignity of their relationship.

I.—The Existence of Hell.

1. All failure in the effort to reach the essential and necessary saddens the heart. We have only to look around us to see the innumerable wrecks which lie upon the shore of time; the bankrupt merchants whose wealth and opportunity have fled together; the decaying bodies which disease is bearing to the grave; the dismasted souls, which no longer make any pretence of sailing to a harbor, but float with their vices through all grades of self-indulgence towards the reef waiting to pierce them. The world is full of these failures, which are saddest when irretrievable. They have missed the aims of youth and ambition, and all

know that life will offer them no other chance to re-establish themselves. Men accept this extinction as the inevitable, and if they struggle in spite of conviction, it is the struggle of despair, or of a hopeful nature that will not acknowledge defeat. It seems reasonable to infer, therefore, that as failure meets so many in the ordinary concerns of life, it will meet many at the judgment seat of God. The state of eternal glory is to be won by special effort on the part of each soul. It is not a state into which we fall as we fell into the world from the womb of the mother. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away." The commandments indicate what measures men must take to avoid failure in achieving the glory of heaven. "If you would enter into eternal life, keep the commandments." Yet the most ordinary observer can bear testimony that many souls pass years, entire lives, without keeping a commandment.

2. Hence the existence of hell can be suspected by the intelligent without any special revelation. One has only to examine the life prisoners in our prisons to understand why there should be place in the next world for the souls who made violation of the law their one pursuit. For Catholics the matter is settled in the teaching of the church that there is a hell, and that it is eternal. The great thinkers of the Christian body have rarely been willing to accept the eternity of suffering, and have often set themselves to explaining probabilities of suffering being done away with in the course of ages. But their reasonings and explanations have failed to diminish the dread mystery of eternal failure. No hint of a restoration is

given in the scriptures. The soul which fails at the judgment seat, fails forever. If it cannot achieve glory in that last trial, there is nothing to indicate that the opportunity will ever again be offered it.

3. The Saviour Himself has spoken on the mystery of hell with no uncertain voice. In that solemn description of the last judgment, to be found in the gospel according to St. Matthew at the close of the 25th chapter, the very details of the lost soul's destiny are plainly given, the causes of his failure to attain life eternal, the reasons for his condemnation to hell. Wrapped in selfishness such as marked the career of the wealthy Dives, these wrecked souls had no time but for their own sinful pleasures, they had no comfort for the wretched, no clothing for the naked, no food for the hungry, no shelter for the homeless, no consolation for the imprisoned; in a word, no charity either for others or themselves. And this is the condemnation of the merciful Christ who came to assure the world of mercy and hope: "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." There is no need to dwell on this sentence. It is supplemented by the last verse of the chapter: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the just into life eternal."—Matt. xxv.

II.—The World against Christ.

1. Naturally the interested deny the existence, or at least the more terrible features of hell. The unbeliever pretends to derive an argument against religion from the horror with which he looks upon a God who

could expose man to the risk of such a destiny; a certain sect denies that Christ ever uttered a word which can be interpreted as referring to an eternal hell; a second denies that the scriptures teach the eternity of punishment; and still a third cries out that the Church has not taught it, only a few ambitious theologians. All these statements are evidence of the dread with which man regards the mystery of hell. No doubt the theologians would be as happy as any others to accept arguments tending to destroy the terrors of hell; but the truth must be upheld though man suffer, for in truth alone is the safety of the race and the individual; and, whether it be peasant or unlettered scientist who studies the teachings of Christ on this matter, common-sense must decide for both in the end as to the meaning of the tremendous passages in which Christ spoke of hell and its sufferings.

2. If there be no hell of any kind, then in the order of salvation or of the spiritual life there is no such thing as failure, and all our analogies are at fault. A man can destroy the organic life of the body: why can he not destroy the life of the soul? The scientists teach us that there is no mercy in nature, whose laws are fulfilled at any cost. If a star vary a hair's-breadth from its appointed course the deflection means ruin for itself and many other planets, probably eternal ruin, only the matter of which they were composed remaining in space: why then cannot the soul, by its deflection from the law of its existence, arrive at the same eternal ruin? Analogies of course prove nothing by themselves, and it would never do to argue too closely from them. As a mat-

ter of fact, however, the materialists have accepted these analogies for their own guidance, and finding no escape from them in this question of the possibility of eternal failure for the immortal soul, have dropped even speculative belief in the life to come. It was the best way to get out of the difficulty. For common-sense teaches us that if you can have absolute failure in all the known conditions of existence, you can have it in the life to come. When this statement of common-sense is supported by the authority of Christ, it becomes irresistible.

3. In like manner are the others answered. The conclusions which flow from their assertions are not tenable. If the element of eternity be taken from the scriptural hell, then this life is not the only probation to which the soul of man is subject. He will have another chance in the infernal regions, where he will be once more instructed in his duties to God, and brought to such an understanding of his wicked life upon earth as to repent thoroughly for his sins. There is no hint of this second probation in the scriptures, and to maintain it throws all belief on this point into confusion. Whatever is found in the sacred writings tends only to confirm the beliefs of Christians since Christ ascended. It is always "eternal fire," "the inextinguishable fire," "the worm which never dies," to which the Saviour, St. John the Baptist, and the Apostles always allude. The separation between the just and the unjust is always referred to as eternal. The great teachers of the church have been only too willing to mitigate the scriptural statements on hell, but have found no justification for explaining away these statements.

Hence the final decisions of the church: that there is a hell; that it is eternal; that the lost descend into it at the instant of death. As to those who find no hell at all in their philosophy, they lack the elementary sense of justice. The drunkard, the brigand, the tyrant, the sinners who die glorying in their sins, after perhaps deliberate rejection of grace, are to receive the same reward as the souls which on earth led lives of holiness. The mere statement shows its absurdity.

III.—Dives.

1. What is the nature of this place of sorrow? Who would dare to say? For two thousand years the Infallible Church has uttered no word on the subject. What a pity that so many preachers have not oftener imitated her reticence. On the contrary, they have been prolific in descriptions of hell in proportion to the church's silence. With the confidence of men who have seen with their own eyes, they have described the tortures of the Inferno, found for them a sort of philosophic basis, and without art, without taste, without prudence, skill, or reservation, have pictured a hell from which reason revolts, which belittles the majesty of God, and provides even the atheist with sound arguments against Divine goodness and power. For it must be remembered—and it seems ridiculous even to make this remark—that in all things God is the loving Father of men; that His decrees are both merciful and just, and are carried out to the smallest detail in a way that offends not man's idea of dignity and taste and propriety. Hence, the pictures of children tied to red-hot pave-

ments, and similar tasteful descriptions, are a real offence against the spirit of religion, and could be as heartily condemned as any heretical proposition, even if they do not as much harm.

2. What a model for preacher and hearer is Christ's own story of Dives in torment. Its simplicity, directness, mercy, and dignity put to shame the vulgar stories of the uncultured. What has the heretic to say to the plain statement: "And the rich man died, and was buried in hell"? What can he say to that other striking declaration: "In all things between us and you a great chaos is established, so that they who would pass hence to you are not able, neither can any one come hither thence"? What a rebuke to the diabolical tortures of the eyes described by so many, that Dives "lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom;" that he could address him, crying out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." What a smarting reproach to the same dealers in horrors that Dives could offer up a petition for his brethren, favor for himself having been refused: "I beseech thee, Father, that you may send him into the home of my father. For I have five brethren, that he may testify to them, lest they should come into this place of torments." How frequently we have heard from bad Christians and uneasy pagans the same appeal: "If one risen from the dead shall go to them, they will do penance;" and how thoroughly and powerfully are they answered in their madness: "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be-

lieve one risen from the dead." It is unnecessary to dwell on this story; it is the rebuke of Christ to heretic and declaimer alike, to the deceivers of men, and the self-deceived.

3. The story of Dives teaches us above all things that God and man do not lose the dignity of nature and relationship even in hell, and that man accepts, as did Dives, his punishment as just. It shows us that hell is separation from God, from friend, from our own lofty destiny. It signifies eternal loneliness. It is the home of the failures, the deliberate or the willing failures, who made shipwreck of this life. It is the home of justice, which we cry out for so bitterly in this world, and still more bitterly cry out against in the next. The sinner will get no sorrier fate than the indifferent—these dead souls that sin only by omission, and fancy their natural good-will is bound to land them safely, forgetting that it is wings, not mere good-will, which enables even a goose to fly. The one refrain of hell is "forever—never," like the refrain in Longfellow's poem. These two words contain the essence of hell's nature. Were it a balmy forest, eternity would rob it of its balm for those who walk its shades cut off from God, their race, and their destiny of glory. Were it even more horrible than the word-mongers have pictured it, yet had an end some time, its flames would become as cooling breezes. Since the dead will not rise again to preach its eternity, every believer should announce it on the housetops. To fear hell for what it really is, is to get some sense of sin; the conviction of sin, sensitiveness to its foulness, means the making of a missionary and a saint.

The Passion of Christ.

And Jesus again crying with a loud voice yielded up His Spirit.—Matt. xxvii. 50.

OUTLINE.

1. It is the shame of our race that we once condemned the most perfect of men to death.
2. The mystery of His death overwhelms us by its sadness.
3. With such difficulty do we realize that God became man, that His passion and death do not deeply touch us.
4. It is only when we distinctly see Christ's human nature that His sorrows appeal to us.
5. The average man leads a life of struggle and obscurity, which ends in the grave.
6. The King of men led the same life, but ended it as a criminal.
7. Yet death, which extinguishes men, raised our King to glory.
8. Because His strength had root in the eternal life, while ours is placed in such things as health and riches.
9. The struggle between the temporal and the eternal life is endless.
10. The victims of this struggle, the lost souls of men, made the bitterness of the passion of Christ.

I.—The Mystery of the Passion.

1. It is the shame of our race, indelible and frightful, that we allowed to live in obscurity, and hurried to a judicial death of infamy the most perfect man the ages are to know. Having been honored by His glorious presence, taught by His word and example, led beyond death to eternal life by His love and power, we eternally discredited our own acumen by refusing to recognize Him as our King, our race by preferring to Him the robber Barabbas, our laws by securing under them His condemnation, our earthly rewards for success, ability, character, public service, position, mentality, by refusing Him any other honors

than the rag of mockery, the crown of thorns, the mean sceptre, the throne of the cross, the grave of the stranger; and history has set its seal on our folly by accepting these emblems as more honorable than our gold and purple, which are oftener the reward of injustice and crime than of true merit and holy virtue.

2. The mystery of the Passion of Christ is that a God could suffer such ignominy and death. We stand appalled no less before the stupidity and malice which doomed Him to death than before His own consent to the deed. When we are told that He died to save us, we are at once conscious that our redemption did not need so great a sacrifice to secure it. God could have chosen any one of a hundred ways to redeem us, without shedding a drop of His Son's blood. His Son might not have been born as man; or might have led such a life as Moses, the life of a Divine ruler and legislator, and died in honor and peace. In fact, the mystery of Christ's Passion begins with His birth, that He should have become man at all, particularly as He foresaw His own career and its Calvary. There seems to be in His entire life a superfluity, which not only could hardly be expected from a God, but might even be reproached in a ruler of genius. It serves to deepen the mystery of His life and death. The unlettered and the sages stand in wonder before the cross and the crib.

3. One effect of this mental confusion and perplexity is to leave us indifferent to the sorrows of Our Lord's heart. We are inclined to doubt, not that He suffered, but that He was really able to suffer. Therefore, His life of poverty and His Passion are a parable rather than a fact, from which we can learn

much and even weep over it, as we do over the sorrows of a hero of the stage or the novel; but we are not stirred to shed such tears as wipe away our sins, or yet such as flow from the heart when real distress appeals to us. With dry-eyed wonder we read the descriptions of the birth in Bethlehem, of the flight into Egypt, of the agony in the garden, the trial, the crucifixion, the burial; and we say to ourselves, how sorrowful this story would really be had it been the story of One who was only man; but since He was also God—we cannot understand, and therefore we cannot weep.

II.—One Explanation.

1. This indifference to the sorrows of the Master is wiped out by prompt acceptance of the Church's teaching that He was as truly man as He was God. The mystery of the Passion and of His life loses half its difficulty when we see some of the probable reasons which sent Him into His mother's womb. He came upon earth as a member of the race He had created to teach that race how to live here and hereafter. He was the type and the mirror of the race. Every human being studying that type was to see man in his perfection, such as each man could attain by close and perfect union with God. Every human being looking into that mirror was to see, as it were, his own personality, reflected in its immortality, its earthly littleness and meanness, its failures, sorrows, and even its sins; "for these He also bore." Christ was to be the leader of the race, first everywhere, so that the foot of man should press no ground which had not first been trod by the holy feet of the King.

If these three terms be kept in view—type, leader, mirror—it will not be difficult to get a measurable grasp of the meaning of His life and death, and of its perfect reasonableness.

2. What is the ordinary life of the ordinary human being? To enter the world, to pass through and out of it, in obscurity; to sweat and suffer for the means of living and the leisure of sickness and death; to endure the anguish of great appetites for which there is no satiety but in extinction; to encounter poverty, insignificance, failure, humiliation; to have visions of a splendid career and to learn to be content with merely living; to live in the smallest of circles, to suffer slights and injuries, to be bruised for our sins and the sins of others, to die as if shoved off the earth by those hungry for our bread, and to be almost grudged the dust which covers us. The majority of human beings die young, poor, as obscure as the weeds of a swamp. Of those fitted to lead by genius, the majority are wrecked on the shoals of disease and sin before maturity can bring fame; a percentage struggles to the summit with clean hands and hearts, bent on helping their kind, and find themselves on Calvary, the sport of the mob they would have aided. Poets die starving, philosophers rot in prison. What a sorrowful number enter the jails, criminals by law or fact, to end their lives in shame. In the end death stills the race, obscure and eminent alike, and the best feel the overwhelming sadness of the grave, into which must go the very emblems of their virtue and power.

3. Now, which one of all these that enter into the world can look into the mirror, Christ, on leaving it,

and say they saw themselves not? He was poor and obscure to the last, though a word would have given Him the love and allegiance of every soul on earth. He chose for His field of labor an obscure Roman province, led a public life for only three years, and came into contact with the powers of the world only at the tribunal of judgment. From the material standpoint His career was a great failure; He scarcely got a dubious mention in the public records of the day. His life ended where successful lives begin, at the age of thirty-three. He died in agony, a pauper and a criminal, so adjudged by the law. What soul that ever combined in his own person all the ills that life and injustice could fling at him is able to look into this mirror of Christ, and not see himself reflected? Here is the explanation of the career of the Saviour from one point of view. As no man can accuse Him of sparing the means of salvation, so no man can say that his experience of sorrow surpassed Our Lord's.

III.—Scorn of Life.

1. All men yield to the charm and power of the Christ, because the more they study Him the more do they see themselves in Him. He satisfies the learned and ignorant, the rude and the refined, the geniuses and the mediocrities, the holy and the defiled, the innocent and the guilty; and all strive to make themselves like Him according to their bent, even where they may not believe in His Divinity. And most of all do men see their own day of suffering in His last agony, while they do not see the noble scorn of life which marked His words and acts from first to last,

and which made His Passion a triumph, not an extinction. We seem to understand no other life but this, and by giving it first place in our mind and heart we do violence to our nature, and aggravate the ills of life without increasing its satisfactions. When we get to regard death as the end of all things for us, and happy living as the sole source of happiness, then every bodily ill, financial loss, disappointment, failure, sickness, humiliation, become tragic; and the longest life, the highest success, the most continuous luck turn into bitterness the moment the shadow of the grave falls upon them.

2. Instead of finding disgrace in death, the Saviour seems really there to have begun His reign both on earth and in heaven. Calvary drew all hearts to Him according to His own foretelling: "And I, being raised, shall draw all things unto Me." Here again the veil is lifted in part from the mysterious Passion. He scorned life as much as we value it, because before His eyes was always the true life of eternity, of which this is only the shadow cast by time. It was this which helped Him to bear all sorrows; He would not permit His Divinity to deaden His Humanity; all His strength came from the same sources whence any man may derive help in suffering. He knew that heaven makes compensation for all woes on earth, and, while accepting this earthly life as the gift of His Father, it was only second with Him, as it should be with all. Therefore He threw away even the lawful chances of escaping early or painful death. Caiphas could have been won to His side by one glance; Herod needed only the miracle he asked for to intervene between Him and the Jews; Pilate was favorable

through his wife's appeal and his own sense of justice. Christ refused to encourage their aid.

3. And how mean is our clinging to life under all circumstances, how thoroughly and foolishly we place the good things of the world before the eternal life, is made plain in the conduct of these three men and its results. They were all worldly place-hunters; life and its pleasures and dignities were their constant pursuit. Caiphas wished to rule always, Herod sought only pleasure, Pilate saw his career closing only with the highest gifts of empire. In condemning Jesus they thought of securing their own honor, whereas they earned eternal disgrace. A word in behalf of the Saviour that night of sorrow might have hurled Caiphas to ruin, but cheap would have been the price for the earthly immortality thereby secured; Herod had the chance to atone for the murder of John the Baptist, and missed it for the infamy of mankind; Pilate could have bought by a little Roman justice a name which Cæsar might have envied. These three lost all by the fatuity which marks the passionate love of men for this world.

IV.—The Endless Struggle.

1. To-day the world has no emblems so glorious as the instruments of the Passion. Yet the struggle which made them holy, the struggle between the life of earth and the life of heaven, between love of self and love of God, between passion and faith, is without end. It began with the first parents. Calvary was only the most tragic of its incidents. In society, in the heart of man the same partisans that met

on Calvary in the darkness are forever at war for the supremacy. Hypocrisy, pride, sin, force, fraud, violence, rage for that power which crucifies innocence, holiness, helpless virtue—in a word, the life eternal. Because where that life is the dominant idea with men the beasts of the human heart lie in strong prisons chained; and where it is feeble or unknown the human race is rent and bloody with the ravages of them. For these wounded souls Jesus wept in His Passion. Their sufferings were the weight of His woe in Gethsemane. He wept for them as a brother who sees the nature of their sufferings and has felt the full depths of their pain.

2. We can turn pale and weep over mangled bodies, but how many can weep over the wrecks of souls, or understand the wounds which the soul may carry under a respectable body? Only the Christ could see them, understand them, weep His bloody tears over them, and only one human being at that tragedy, perhaps, was able to enter His heart, and sympathize with His grief—His mother. With Him she might have seen the sad procession of the generations that were to come; passing from birth to death, from creation to judgment, across the hill of Calvary, with only the averted face, or the dull stare of indifference, or the hate of the Jews, or the laugh of frivolity, or the glare of interrupted passion, for the mournful form and the heavy heart of the lover of man. It is something for us of the faith, if in spite of our ignorance and weakness, the weight of the mystery, the painful gloom, we can murmur with the centurion: "Indeed, this man was the Son of God." —Mark xxxix.

Faith.

Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.—John xx. 29.
I have kept the faith.—2 Tim. iv. 7.
But the just shall live in his faith.—Hab. xi. 4.

OUTLINE.

1. The mark of the true Catholic should be a deep and ever-deepening faith.
2. We received the true faith in our baptism, and may deepen it daily.
3. Yet with many advantages the faith of the past shames us.
4. The unfaith of our time is very marked.
5. Men remain as stubborn toward religion as the ancient Jews in face of the miracles at Naim and Bethany.
6. And to each problem of life and the soul and the future they answer: I do not know.
7. How much like these unfortunates are the faithless disciples, the habitual sinners, and the indifferent.
8. Contrast with them the faith of St. Paul, of the martyrs, of the devout in every age.
9. To every argument which the world brings against the faith, the true Catholic should answer with a firm *Credo*.

I.—The Faith of the Canaanite.

1. Lent is that season which the Church secures for her children that they may take time for thought and consequent resolution. For ten months of the year we are so busied in the cares of the world, that thought and purpose would drift away altogether from the life of the soul and the life to come, did not some power outside ourselves insist on a certain withdrawal from moneymaking and bread-winning, and an examination of our present spiritual condition. This is the great advantage of Lent, and we should make a real effort to use it. First, let our thought be directed to that faith which is within us, to make sure

we still possess it vitally; and then let us resolve from this time on to become more and more fervent Catholics. It may seem a superfluous resolution, for have we not been Catholics from our cradle? True; and the Apostles were followers and intimates of Christ for three years; yet in the moment of His trial and danger, on the very night when they had boasted of their willingness to go to death with Him, they fled before the mob sent out by the Jewish leaders to seize Him in the garden of Gethsemane. Habitual sinners often boast that they will never give up the faith of their baptism, yet each hour of their sinful lives loosens another strand of it. Thought must precede resolution, and resolution must be followed by steady action; without these what are mere words?

2. The faith of Catholics in our day ought to be of the strongest, so carefully and happily has it been nurtured in them. It is a fire that burns in the veins, not a mere set of words dropping from the lips. We hear on every side the declarations of men who proclaim their faith in Christ; but they have never been baptized, they repeat simply what they have heard from their teachers, and the true faith is not in them. By the sacrament of Baptism the true faith in Christ enters the heart of the Catholic child, it is enlarged and confirmed by the sacrament of Confirmation, and a hundred thousand graces influence his soul in consequence. He shares in the graces of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, the sacrament of Matrimony has prepared for him a holy home; the ministration of priest, church, book, sermon, school is ever at his side urging to good, strengthening in temptation. The history of the great Church of two

thousand years proves to him how thoroughly God has worked in that Church from the beginning, and its present greatness amid the storms of persecution proves to him its vitality. In fact, it would not be possible to name all the encouragements which we have to believe over those who lived in the days of Christ, of the Apostles, of the early persecutions. Within and without each Catholic soul the faith burns like a heavenly flame, unquenchable while men are faithful to the commandments. "If you keep my commandments you shall abide in my love."—John xv.

3. Yet with all our encouragements to strong faith, the faith of the gospel time shames us by its wonderful strength and fervor. The woman of Canaan puts a blush on the cheek of too many Catholics when they hear her story. Her daughter was possessed of the devil, and she appealed to Our Lord for a cure. "Who answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us. And he answering said: I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. But she came and adored him, saying: Lord, help me. Who answering said: It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs. But she said: Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering said to her: O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour."—Matt. xv. Three times He repulsed this faithful and believing mother, though that great and tender heart of His wept for her; and three times the faith in Him

brought her to His feet, and won the miracle and the commendation. It was the same with the centurion, whose robust faith in the Son of God earned that splendid tribute from Christ: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel;" and whose sublime words, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed," the Church has made her own forever. The woman of Canaan and the Roman soldier had not a tithe of the advantages we possess to urge them to believe in Christ; yet what Catholic of this century could show a faith more glorious!

II.—The Unfaith Around Us.

1. It is true that our time no longer makes it a reproach to believe nothing of the life and destiny of the soul; and in consequence we cannot but be affected by the chilly atmosphere in which we live. Men even take a pride in announcing that they are no longer bound by superstitions, but live like freemen, that is, like animals, with no thought of the morrow. Faith is put down as a worn-out shackle of tyranny's day. Reason alone is supposed to rule in souls thus freed from ancient tyranny. How easy it is for men to forget that life becomes impossible for them and for society without faith of some kind. This entire community is built upon faith in other persons than ourselves. We have faith in the honesty and fidelity of the men who administer the government, in the leaders who command the army and the navy, in our representatives at foreign courts, though we know nothing about them; we trust our lives to steamships

and railroads, our money to banks, our goods to customers; we swear by the honor of our parents, the purity of our daughters, wives, mothers, the honesty of our sons; and we are ready to spill our own blood or the blood of others in defence of things which we take upon faith, for we have no other way of taking them. Yet when religion appeals to this human faith daily in a thousand ways, sceptics will have nothing to do with faith in their own conscience, or faith in the history of the past, because it is in the interest of the soul.

2. It was thus with the Jews in the time of Our Lord. They believed in a coming Messiah, in the existence of God, in the life to come, and in the judgment which preceded that life. They examined with care the pretensions of all teachers of the people such as John and Our Lord. They heard with their own ears the claims of the Saviour to the kingship of His people, and saw with their own eyes wondrous miracles. Some of them stood that day near the gate of the city of Nain when Jesus stopped the funeral procession of him who was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." What bitter, unbelieving hearts they must have carried in their bosoms to remain unaffected by the scene of the young man's return from the dead. They saw the marble body, heard the commanding words which pierced the impenetrable walls of death, saw life's red color run along the stiffened limbs and blush in the livid lip, and pallid cheek, sparkle in the glassy eye; they saw mother and son clasped in loving embrace, and prostrate adore the Lord of life and death; they witnessed the terror, wonder, exaltation of the crowd; and they

could turn from this scene as from the raising of the daughter of Jairus, or of Lazarus, with only hate in their hearts for the Being who had come to disturb their self-admiration and upset their schemes of sin.

3. The unbelievers of this day are as fortunate in one way as were the ancient Jews. The religion of Christ has won its unconquerable place in the world, and no man can withhold admiration for its history and its lofty doctrines. It is as clear to the eye of all men as were the miracles of Jesus to the men of His time. It has had its unbroken and glorious history of nearly twenty centuries, it has proved itself the only power of time that could successfully cope with the spiritual and mental miseries of men, it has withstood all the attacks of malice, ignorance, and time, it has given men hope for despair, faith for doubt, and love for hate, it has brought eternity to the very doors; yet the sceptic miserably shuts his eyes and will not see. He is beset by the most cruel problems, which rack his life, which he cannot avoid unless he ceases to think; and to them all he has that brilliant response: I do not know. The savage of the wilderness satisfies his poor mind with some sort of an answer to the inquiries raging witihin him, but the cultured unbeliever has only the reply of the child to his own soul: I do not know. After centuries of experience, study, investigation, the result is: I do not know! How admirable! How flattering to reason, the great judge of all the things that are! The times are dry-rotten with this unfaith, and the children of Christ cannot but be affected by it.

III.—Credo, the Watchword.

1. We see the effects of the chilly atmosphere which we breathe in the numbers stolen from us by interest, passion, and downright laziness. Because we are Catholics by baptism many seem to think that the faith within us can be lost in no manner whatever. They do not rank faith as a virtue like purity or honesty, which can be at once destroyed by impurity or stealing, and they do not see it dying by inches through their failure to keep fuel to the fire. They dream that as born Catholics they will surely be believers of a kind forever. They forget that a time came to certain disciples of Christ when, with all the wonders they had seen and heard, faith in Him was no longer to be found in them, and "they walked no more with Him." If this thing happened in the green wood, what may not be feared in the dry? The sinner is certain he will one day come back to the faith he is leaving for sin. He must know that every sin he commits loosens his hold on his faith a degree, and that the habit of sin destroys faith entirely in a very short time; at the moment of return to faith, he discovers that he is without it, that he cannot believe, that he has not the strength, or desire, or longing, for that return journey which appeared so easy to make years ago. In what a miserable condition are these unfortunates. It shows us that faith is not a coat which can be put on or put off at will. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and by it the just man lives. As the engineer watches the fires in his engines, as the cap-

tain studies and longs for the winds which fill his sails, as men cherish the fires of life, so should Christians keep up in their hearts that divine fire which is the motive power urging them on to heaven.

2. What a splendid faith had that mighty genius St. Paul, who could feel and write in a hopeless prison the fine utterances of his epistles. The Church in his day was but a seed in the tremendous acreage of the world, his work was ended and seemed so very little, death was soon to embrace him; yet the clear eye and the strong heart of faith were no whit discouraged by the fogs and damps of ill-success and overhanging tragedy. What hearts of iron had the martyrs of the first ages, who could court death, imprisonment, exile, poverty, separation, for Christ, and lose no spark of the faith that burned in them. Their nights had no darkness, for all things shone in the light of Christ; though no such comforts as surround us belonged to their age. What a dignity belongs to the humblest soul in whom sound knowledge of his destiny is mingled with a high regard for the precepts of the faith. He is like a skilful pilot sailing the narrow channels of this world toward the safe ocean of eternity. The nights may be clear or foggy, the channels treacherous, the weather stormy, and he has no fear. His faith makes all things bright as the day, and his skill carries the good ship of the soul clear of reef and shallow. He has no uncertainty. His eye sees but one thing, his heart beats to one joy: the great ocean of eternal joy ahead. "But the just shall live in his faith."

3. Faith, then, is the mark of the true Catholic,

and in resolving to be true Catholics our resolve means that the fire of the faith shall burn brighter in us. The world through its sceptics is bent on destroying our faith. It cannot rest easy in its unbelief while any human being believes. Therefore to all its sneers, persuasions, arguments, let us answer with united *Credo.* When it cries out, You are the fools of superstition, the victims of the scheming priest, answer *Credo ;* when it smiles indulgently and points out the absurdity of this and that doctrine, answer *Credo ;* when it displays the bribe of place or fortune, answer *Credo ;* when it comes with the sword and flame of persecution, let the *Credo* resound in prison, in exile, in death with the martyr's vigor. The world has nothing to give worth the taking in the place of faith. What the world gives it always takes back again; and what it takes from us in exchange for its rather tawdry wares is never returned. Thus it has often cheated the ambitious into surrendering youth for dissipation, happiness for power, freedom for wealth; it still owns its dissipations, power, and wealth, but the ambitious never saw youth, freedom, or happiness again. For our faith it would give us a very genteel doubt, which is no bargain, as faith is of the few, while doubt can always be picked up cheap in any auction-room.

The Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ.—Phil. iii. 8.

OUTLINE.

1. Faith gives the Christian insight into the heart and mind of Jesus Christ.
2. Yet many Christians pass through life better informed about popular heroes than about their Master.
3. They forget that each soul must see, know, and serve Him in judgment and eternity.
4. The Catholic has no excuse for not knowing Him well.
5. The Sacraments and the priesthood have their powers solely from Him. The external life of the Church has reference only to Him.
6. The Eucharist, which is Christ Himself, is the very centre of the visible and invisible life of the Church.
7. The result of knowing and loving Him is wisdom and love for the meanest.
8. Man may not serve the world and Him, as the examples of Judas, Pilate, and Peter prove.
9. How to attain true knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

I.—We Must Know and Love Christ.

1. Americans often return from a tour of Europe more deeply admiring their own country for its happy conditions. In the same way Catholics turn from the sects to the Church, delighted with the order and certainty found in it as compared with the disorder and uncertainty outside. The source of this order and certainty in the Church is the perfect faith of the people on the one side and the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit on the other. Faith is that virtue which accepts the great truths of religion without any other demonstration than their mere state-

ment on God's authority. This faith confers upon man an insight into truths which are in a measure outside the domain of reason. He sees and comprehends them. The light of heaven shines upon his nature, his condition, his various relationships, and enables him to follow, cultivate, improve them all beyond what he could do by the light of reason alone. By faith he sees sin as a plague, death as a punishment of sin, judgment as a vindication of both God and man, heaven as an inheritance of love, hell as an inheritance of justice; and above all he sees, learns to know and love Jesus Christ his Master, not merely by the light of history, but by the light of the Holy Ghost. This light so illuminates his reason, his will, and his heart, that he sees Jesus as His blessed mother saw Him, in the manger of Bethlehem, in the little home of Nazareth, on awful Calvary, on sublime Olivet.

2. To see Christ thus is the highest result, the most beautiful fruit of faith. For this was faith given to men, that they might arrive at intimacy with Jesus, not through the senses, but through conviction. All their lives long by a hundred varying impressions the children of Christ are made acquainted with Him; lisping His holy Name in infancy, hearing His praises in home, school, and church, brought to Him in the Eucharist, reading of Him in many books, seeing everywhere in stone, on canvas, in pictured art of every sort, the story of His wonderful life and love. And these impressions blend into one overwhelming conviction by the power of the Holy Ghost working upon willing and pure souls, until His disciples come to know Jesus even as His mother

knew Him after thirty years of the intimacy of Nazareth. Alas! how few seem to care for this wonderful, this consoling knowledge and love of Jesus Christ! Even the ordinary good can pass through life without such acquaintance with Him as they have with their least considered neighbors. A great body of Christians always stand like the cattle in the pastures, stupidly unable to distinguish their master from any stranger that passes on the road. The sinners put their sins about their understanding like a fog, the good put their prejudices, the indifferent their laziness, lest they may see and know their Divine Master. The popular heroes receive more attention, arouse a livelier interest in these people, than the Son of God. Such a creature as Napoleon stimulates their fancy, while the Christ seems to dull it. The old, old failing of human nature! "I have brought up children and exalted them: but they have despised me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood."—Isa. i.

3. Yet the day comes at last when we can no longer ignore His claims, and when the knowledge we have avoided so assiduously is forced upon us to our sorrow and shame. We pass to our judgment, where we shall see Him as He is, and see ourselves in our folly. At the judgment seat we shall learn to know Him in the twinkling of an eye, not as our beloved Master but as our Judge; we shall see Him as the Avenger, not as the Father; we shall serve Him, but it will hardly be with love. This thought ought to find consideration with the lazy and the careless, if not with the sinners, who are too much in love with

sin to regard any terror of the future. Our whole training as Catholics has but one aim: to bring us to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. We have but to move with the great current of the Church's life to acquire almost without effort this love and knowledge. What supreme folly to wait for that last moment to acquire intimacy with our one Friend; until we are actually standing in His visible presence.

II.—How to Know and Love Christ.

1. It sounds strangely to hear an intelligent and mature Catholic ask how he shall proceed to gain a knowledge and love of his Lord. His life, if it has had any religious training at all, has been lived face to face with Christ; but so much a matter of course does humankind make the wonders of existence, that they see little beyond their precious kingdom of self. The great society called the Church was instituted solely to bring men to Christ and to keep them at His side. One has but to ride with the current, keeping ears and eyes wide open, and the mind interested, to gain unconsciously a tremendous intimacy with the Son of God. In fact, there is such an excess of teaching Christ, the Church has so levied on every possible means of bringing men to Him, that it is regularly accused of obscuring Him, hiding Him, from the souls of men, by the multitude of details in its training. So closely stands the priest to his people, preaching Christ, that the infidels insult us with the term priest-ridden. All the details of the life of the Church are so many rays of light, which have their source in Him, the sun and centre of our existence.

"I am the vine: you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing."—John xv.

2. Examine a few of these innumerable details. The Pope as head of the Church claims his position in the name of Christ, the bishop does the same in his diocese, the priest likewise in his parish; and all that they do by virtue of their office is done by His authority, and for His glory. The sacraments all speak of Him, as they were founded by Him and are administered according to His command; at Baptism the child is admitted into the Church in His name, included in the invocation of the Blessed Trinity; at Confirmation the same child receives His special gift of the Holy Ghost; in Penance his sins are absolved in the name of the Trinity with the sign of the cross; in Holy Orders the young priest is sent out to preach the truth in His name; in Matrimony the man and woman are united in His name, a union which human power is forbidden to disturb; and in Extreme Unction the sick body and the sick soul are blessed in His name. The office of the preacher in the Church is exercised by His authority, and its main duty is to preach Jesus Christ crucified; every prayer, whether made to God or to the angels and saints, is a petition whose efficacy depends upon Him; and the honors publicly paid to Mary, Joseph, the saints, and the angels, have their sole source in the fact that these human and angelic beings are His most faithful and purest servants. The tower of this church speaks of Him in that it carries His gibbet, the now glorified cross; this altar is the Calvary upon which He was crucified; this

ever-burning light, which tells of His Presence in the tabernacle, represents the eternal flame of His Body dwelling among us; these sculptured stations, pictured windows, and frescoes, portray His life and the glory He shed upon His friends; and the solemn and beautiful ceremonies of the sanctuary, the splendid vestments, shadow forth in a feeble way the devotion of the souls that serve Him.

3. Last of all, but immeasurably above all in Itself, is the Blessed Eucharist. These wonderful details of the external life of the Church draw our attention to Him, even bring us close to Him, and the Sacraments prepare us for union with Him; but the Blessed Eucharist is Christ Himself, Who becomes the actual and direct guide of the soul that seeks the knowledge and the love of Him. One can learn much of any man by studying with sympathy and affection his ordinary life, as it appears to the general world; but one learns all when the man takes him into his house and into his heart, reveals his most secret comings and goings, and opens up the past and the present to the inquirer. Thus it is with Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. The souls who seek for the knowledge and love of Him there have little delay in getting those treasures which survive the wreck of human fortunes on the shores of time.

III.—The Fruits of Knowledge and Love.

1. It is not enough to say that we know and love Jesus Christ. Our thoughts and actions must give proof of both to ourselves and to our neighbors. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Lip-service is

easy, and sounds well. Those who serve Christ with knowledge and love surprise the world by their wisdom and wit where neither is looked for. The very young, the very old, the uneducated, the uncultured, fired by the spirit of Christ, excite the wonder of the sceptical, who look for wisdom and wit only under certain conditions. Catharine of Siena, an ordinary lady of rank, who lived in a day when study was somewhat primitive and elementary for women of rank, had political previsions that surprised statesmen by their correctness, and theological ability that won the reverence of the doctors. St. Paul had much of the world's learning in his capacious brain, and ranked it with dung when compared with the knowledge and love of his Lord. The knowledge of Him is true wisdom; for real stupidity seek out the learned pagan of the schools, like Spencer, for instance, who can follow a human emotion as an Indian follows a trail, and is blinder than a bat in the sun when religion comes into question. Once you have seen Christ as He wishes that all should see Him, the glory of this world will have departed. The men that saw Him of old on Thabor and Olivet were so enraptured with that delight as never to forget the sweet visions. An empire put forth all its strength to persuade them of their folly in preaching Christ, and shrunk to littleness in the effort; but their faith in Him remained.

2. To know and to love Christ is a real power in our day, and is so acknowledged by the tricky world, which would have us politely serve both Christ and itself, as do those Catholics who profess their faith in Christ proudly, while serving their own pleasures and observing no commandments. We have already

been told by Our Lord that no man can serve two masters, and yet we are forever trying to perform this impossibility. Judas tried it, hoping to make a little money without doing his Master much harm, and the result was death for Christ, suicide and eternal disgrace for himself. Pilate tried it, and the result was a shameful surrender to the murderous Jews, the condemnation of the innocent, and the blasting of his own career. Peter tried it in denying Christ to save himself from danger, and wept to the last for the infidelity he displayed toward his Friend and Master. It may be taken for granted that where a Pope, an Apostle, and a Prince failed, we shall hardly succeed. A glance around at the numerous failures among our own acquaintances to run with Christ while dallying with sin, ought to satisfy us that only thorough knowledge of Jesus Christ can result in true love and service of Him.

3. You will come to thorough knowledge and perfect love first by desiring both and asking for them. "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive; that your joy may be full."—John xvi. Next, make certain to keep the commandments. "If you love me, keep my commandments."—John xiv. Have the greatest interest in performing your duties to all who have a claim on you. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." —John xiii. Cultivate a particular love for the poor, the wretched, the sinful, the helpless. "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it unto me."—Matt. xxv. Adherence to these simple rules will lead any honest

soul to the knowledge and love of Jesus, and there will be no doubt about the possession of these splendid gifts. Here is St. John's testimony: "And by this we know that we have known him, if we keep his commandments. He who saith that he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but he that keepeth his word, in him in very deed the charity of God is perfected; and by this we know that we are in him."—1 Ep. ii. Walking in the way of the commandments keeps the heart open to the divine inspirations. The mere study of the ways of the Church in making Christ better known to us all will fill us with knowledge of Him. And then by degrees we may arrive, if we choose, at that sublime height attained by St. Paul and many others, to regard all things as mere rottenness compared with knowing and loving the Son of God.

The Sacraments.

Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars.—Prov. ix. 1.

I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.—Apocal. i. 12, 13.

OUTLINE.

1. Our Lord knew the difficulty of following His law, and therefore gave us the seven sacraments.
2. Hence, while pagans have some excuse for their commonplace lives, Catholics have none.
3. The great and continuous grace of Baptism is our first strength and glory.
4. Our second is the reception of the Holy Ghost and His gifts in Confirmation.
5. By Penance we can preserve innocence, establish or protect virtue, root out habits of sin.
6. The Eucharist gives us the direct personal service of Christ.
7. Matrimony secures for the child a holy and well-ordered home.
8. Extreme Unction guards the hours of sickness, and soothes the anguish of death.
9. The ill-fortune of those who misuse the Sacraments.

I.—The Life of Grace.

1. The Christian is called to the life of grace, to a life superior to that of nature, which the pagan usually leads. It is no easy matter to live up to the Christian standard, particularly in a nation like ours, where the pagans are as numerous as the Christians, and utterly reject the purity and holiness of life demanded by the teachings and the commands of Christ. Paganism looks only to this life and its pleasures. Eating and drinking luxuriously, dress-

ing sumptuously, amusing itself in all possible ways, completely given over to carnal delights, these are its occupations in leisure hours; and its labors are purely for money, earthly power, and rank, as the means by which greater pleasures are gained for the hours of idleness. It does not recognize the commandments. The outward forms of decency and refinement it is careful to observe, and in young races the natural powers are vigorous enough to keep the nature sweet for a long time; but for the most part pagan life is a great swamp from which rise the deadliest vapors, fatal to the life of grace in any Christian exposed to them. The earliest Christians lived in the very heart of this swamp. We are more fortunate, yet our position is mournful. It is easier at any time to be a pagan than a Christian, because the life of grace is a life of effort, struggle, hard labor, while the pagan life runs with the current of passion. Surrounded as we are by the swamps of paganism, it requires all our watchfulness to neutralize the effects of their deadly vapors on our souls. Our Lord understood the difficulties we would have to meet in following His commands; therefore He left us the seven sacraments as a perpetual and constant help against our own weaknesses and the influence of our fellows.

2. The scheme of these sacraments is of wonderful power and beauty. The little child is met at the door of life by Baptism and at once made a child of God; when reason has developed Penance sheds its light and heat upon his mind and will; while innocence is still strong in him the Eucharist becomes its rampart; at the dawn of manhood Confirmation puts its

glorious armor on him and sends him out to the world's struggle; Matrimony has already secured for him a decent home, Holy Orders has long provided him with leaders and teachers, and in his last moments of sickness and death the soft light of Extreme Unction illumines the pathway to the grave. Christ cannot be accused of not having provided his children with every protection against the assaults of the world and their own nature. For this reason there is little or no excuse for us when we take up habits of sin, and deliberately remain in them. The pagan has some excuse. He has been trained as a child of nature, and has heard little of the life of grace. Our Lord said of the Jews: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. . . . If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my father."—John xv. To many pagans Christ has not yet spoken and so they are without sin; but to us Our Lord has been speaking year after year since our birth and long before it, and therefore our infidelities are sins. He has protected and adorned us with the jewels of the Sacraments. Yet for too large a number the gift of the Sacraments has been a mere casting of pearls before swine.

3. We are born to know and love Christ through the faith He established. Deep and abiding faith is the mark of the true Catholic, and the fruit of faith is the knowledge and love of Jesus. This faith is placed in us, deep in our souls like an eternal fountain in the rock, by the sacrament of Baptism.

Through all our lives the flow of grace from this holy spring is to be endless. Its refreshing waters are intended to keep green and fruitful the soil of our human nature, and to develop in us all the virtues, as the mountain stream keeps fertile the valley through which it runs. Of itself the grace of Baptism is powerful enough, if properly used, to carry a man clean and virtuous to his judgment. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."—Mark xvi. Yet so hard, arid, sandy is the soil of our nature, that the gracious stream, lacking the coöperation of our will, might flow for a century through the soul, and not secure a single harvest. We have seen the phenomenon in many arid Catholics. The pearl in this instance was thrown to the swine.

II.—Three Other Channels of Grace.

1. To the gift of Baptism Our Lord added the sacrament of Confirmation in which the Holy Ghost armed us like a knight of old with breast-plate, helmet, shield, and javelin, that we might carry Christ's standard honorably and bravely through the combats of time. Sin, temptation, nature's inclinations and passions, the world's bribes, are ferocious opponents; but straws are as strong as they when men oppose to them wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, and the fear of the Lord, as these splendid gifts are given to us in Confirmation. Did we use them as Christ intended, there is no power on earth able to overcome us; but not only do we leave them to rust in idleness, we also forget that we ever received them, and the jeering

world is often treated to the spectacle of the Christian soldier flying from the field of battle without a stain of combat on his glorious armor, or casting it aside to fraternize with the enemy, to lie drunken and satiated at their feasts, even to die in their shameful dissipations. These two sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation are alone sufficient to carry us through the world with decency and honor and to present us before the throne of judgment crowned victors after life's battle. Nevertheless, hundreds forget that they ever received the innocence conferred by the one, and the powers conferred by the other. A second time is the pearl cast before the swine.

2. The generous love of God for His children was not satisfied with these two special gifts, and the Sacrament of Penance was added to them. That we might preserve the innocence of childhood, and protect the virtue of our youth the priest of the confessional was provided for us; that we might wash away the sins of our foolishness, root out the habits of sin, and supplant them by habits of virtue, the absolution of Penance, with its graces of purification and restoration, was set like a pillar in the Lord's temple. It is a great deal in a world which seeks innocence like an epicure his delicacies, to have kept an innocent soul in its original purity; in a world which makes sin virtue, to convince a sinner of his filth and make him remove it by grace; in a world which boasts of its power to hold man down to nature's level, to break the chain of habit and raise man to the supernatural life; yet all these things are the common successes of Penance. Still, what multitudes of Catholics avoid the sacrament, and to quiet their consciences repeat

the childish objections of human pride and ignorance: that men should not kneel to man, though the child kneels to the parent, the lover to his mistress, the criminal to his judge; that our secrets are not the priest's, though no one finds any difficulty in telling the most shameful secrets to friend, lawyer, physician. With Baptism, Confirmation, and Penance men might lead the lives of the saints, and with Penance alone the world could be kept in order and cleanliness. In a third instance the precious pearls of Christ are thrown to the swine.

3. Still, the generosity of God is not exhausted, and to these Sacraments is added the great and mysterious gift of the Christ Himself in the Blessed Eucharist. Men have remembered the visits of a king, or a poet, or a general, or a statesman to their houses, and bequeathed the memory "as a rich legacy unto their issue." The distinguished visitor usually left nothing behind and often took much away, yet the honor of the visit was never forgot by the recipient, nor by posterity. Yet how numerous the Christians who positively decline the visit of Christ under the veil of the bread and wine, who wish to forget the days when He honored their innocence by His Presence, who have cast out all His gifts, the gifts of Him Who brought much and borrowed nothing. Recall that this Prince in His earthly time spoke to the dead and life returned to them, looked upon the lepers and their rottenness fled into its native grave, touched the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, the limbs of the paralyzed, and they became sound men. Remember that this Man is beloved of the human race, of human history, of time itself, the Eternal King

even of the pagans; and wonder at the secret scorn, the dead indifference of those whom the visit of a king to their houses would overwhelm with honor! It is heartlessness and unfaith of this sort which disgust us with ourselves, with our race, and force us to doubt the reasonableness of our own nature. Once more the Lord has cast His choicest pearl to the swine.

III.—The Reward of the Swine.

1. Still the record of God's honors grows. The love which makes man and woman of one flesh, which propagates the human race in love, which trains the child and guards the race-nest in love, and which man regards rightly as a most perfect thing in the human order, Our Lord would honor with permanency, stability, and perfection, and therefore He establishes the Sacrament of Matrimony. Henceforward, to those who will it, this noblest form of human love may take on a certain character of immortality, surviving youth, change, beauty, undisturbed by sin and its temptations, never seduced by the passion of the moment, superior to the errors of the social philosophers, increasing with years, and utterly devoted to its human offspring. And that this offspring may in a measure touch heaven before death, that the visible human form of Christ may in a feeble way be ever in the sight of men, that the family, the nation, the soul may never be without a leader and teacher, that there may be a human link between heaven and earth, the Sacrament of Holy Orders gives us the priest, the perpetual man, who can no more fail from this earth until the judgment

than can the memory of the Christ. "How wonderful are thy ways, O God, and how incomprehensible thy judgments!" Even death has cast over it the holy veil of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. As man was received at the gate of life by Baptism, so is he dismissed to his eternity with the last oiling; sanctified at his entrance, sanctified and comforted at his departure; more honorable and more honored at the last moment, when he becomes useless to the hard world, than at the first, when the world sought him as food for its passions. Thus every moment of our lives is honored and blessed by the Sacraments of Christ. Is it strange that God can excuse no Catholic for a bad life or a cold heart!

2. The more we study the wealth of grace which lies at the doors of a Christian, the more we wonder that true faith, true knowledge and love of Jesus Christ should be absent from any Christian heart. The lightest examination of the sacraments is sufficient to convince any man that here is grace enough to nullify all the poisons of paganism, and to build up the souls of men to the strength of giants. The existence of these sacraments is the condemnation of the indifferent and the sinful Catholics. That which builds up can also become a source of destruction. "Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel."—Luke ii. We are Catholics, born to the life of grace, which we must accept or go into eternal darkness and pain. In the latter case all our blessings turn to maledictions. Baptism made us the heirs to heaven, and instead we inherit hell; Confirmation enlisted us as the soldiers of Christ, and in the end we are classed

with the traitors; Penance lifted us up many a time to heights of heavenly delight and made us the joy of the angels, and behold we are cast down forever to the joy of our eternal enemies; and the Christ of the Eucharist, having desired us as His friends and intimates, and forced on us eternal life, must condemn us to eternal death and the everlasting friendship of Satan. All this is the natural result of that stupidity and malice which treated the sacraments as the swine treat the pearls. "And the spirits besought him saying; Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And Jesus immediately gave them leave. And the unclean spirits going out, entered into the swine; and the herd with great violence was carried headlong into the sea, being about two thousand, and were stifled in the sea."—Mark v.

Sin.

Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.—James i. 15.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. vi. 23.

OUTLINE.

1. Men understand and value the important positions in life, and keenly feel their responsibility.
2. Yet what are these positions, and their responsibility, compared with the dignity and destiny of the Christian?
3. Both dignity and destiny are destroyed at one blow by the awful power of sin.
4. The first consequence of sin is our surrender to justice.
5. The second is the natural results of sin for the whole race, death and the grave.
6. The others are the natural effects flowing from violation of the laws of life.
7. With the fate of public sinners before them men can still talk lightly of their sins.
8. Because the sense of sin is lost in them, as the sense of dirt in an unclean person.
9. The grace of feeling keenly the stain of sin.

I.—The Power of Sin.

1. Men ever have one measure for the business of the body, and another for the business of the soul. Shrewd and even wise in the affairs of the market, they become the veriest fools in dealing with their soul's life; and where no man or combination of men, no cunning, no personal weakness, could overreach them by a penny, any ranter, the simplest of knaves, their own weaknesses, can deprive them of grace here and heaven hereafter. They place large value on the important places in society. They appreciate to the

utmost the skill of the lawyer, of the physician, and of the financier; they feel sincerely the debt which all men owe to the faithful captain of the steamer, the watchful engineer of the train, the brave general of the army, the devoted officer of the state; they praise earnestly the honest father of the family, the honest officer of a corporation, the honest teacher of the school. And none were so quick as they to denounce and condemn these people in responsible positions, when incapacity, ignorance, negligence, or drunkenness led them into fearful disasters; when the ship went down, or the train was wrecked, when government was robbed, or the army defeated, when the sick were neglected, the children corrupted, the banks broken, and the country's financial credit endangered, because the responsible proved faithless to their great trusts.

2. This is good sense, of course, and it must be turned against themselves. If they condemn these failures and applaud the sentence to death or to long imprisonment, what shall they say in their own defence? As the baptized children of Christ they have held important positions and worn high honors, which always carry with them grave responsibilities. From the multitude the Lord took them in the day of their baptism, and clothed them with the garments of the Christian, brought them up in holy homes, in innocence, in peace, accustomed them to the supernatural life in youth that it might not press their shoulders too heavily in age, and promised them strength in this life, and eternal happiness in the wonderful life to come. In return He asked that they should love Him, keep His commandments, speak to

all men of Him by example rather than by words, and thus spread among men the knowledge and love of Him. They were made princes of heaven, all their affairs became eternal in importance and interest, and the little matters which interest the animal in man sank into insignificance. Even the great places in the gift of society became small beside the dignity of the true Christian. And what a tremendous responsibility rested upon these favored children of God to remember their birthright, to observe its conditions, and to arrive safe at the eternal goal.

3. With one stroke sin destroyed both dignity and destiny. The faithless general yielded to treason, the captain of the steamer gave way to drunkenness, the father of the family became a castaway; in consequence an army was defeated, a number of poor souls underwent the bitter anguish of death at sea, and the children turned beggars and thieves; and in the same way the Christian given over to sin became a traitor to his Lord, drowned his destiny in evil, and turned his soul with all its graces forth among beggars and thieves. If death and execration pursued the traitor, the drunkard, and the parent, what punishment shall reach the faithless Christian? Here we see the awful power of sin. There is nothing in nature like it, though nature has terrible agencies of evil. The fanged adder which pierces the unwary foot treading the safe soil, the swift lightning whose bolt so fearfully pierces life's bright armor, the assassin creeping with velvet step and fatal blade behind the vigorous victim, are faint types of the suddenness and power of sin. Great and sudden catastrophies in nature and among men usually make their presence known

by clamor and fearful portents, but sin does its work in peace, in dreadful silence, as if God and nature stood appalled; and it is only in after years that the cries of the victims reach the ears of men. We hear the groans of them that perish by death around us, but only the angels hear the anguished cries of dying, murdered souls.

II.—The Punishments of Sin.

1. The power of sin ought to terrify us, but having lived in sin or beside it so long we have lost the sense of terror. The agencies of death we fear to the last moment of our lives, but the slayer of the soul is rather loved than feared. We must study the consequences of sin by the light of the Holy Spirit in order to awaken in our hearts that healthful terror which removes sin from our households. The first consequence of mortal sin is the surrender of ourselves to the justice of God. We are criminals, we have violated the law, and the offence is known to the authorities. What escape can there be for us? At any moment we may be summoned to the bar of eternal justice, this heart may cease to beat, these eyes may close to open on the dreadful scene of trial in one instant. With what dread criminals regard the prison which has ensnared them, the court which tries them, the sentence which will infallibly be pronounced and executed. Yet the violators of the law of God suffer no such pangs as these, and continue to sin with joy. They know that only a small percentage of men dies suddenly without time for preparation, and they count on the long sickness and the

death-bed. They are right. It is only the few who are surprised in their sins by death. Their mistake is in supposing that time for preparation also includes the gift of repentance.

2. Sin carries with it, however, a series of natural punishments, which no man can escape. Sickness and death are the children of sin; sickness with its wearisome hours, its pain and desolation, death with its separations, and the corruption of the grave. Study them for a moment. Men who have seen the agonies of one dying from the bite of a rattlesnake, or from hydrophobia, or from tetanus, never lose the memory of these horrors. Yet how few and insignificant are these tragedies compared with the sicknesses, separations, deaths of the billions of human beings that have passed away since the world began. We shudder at the poison of the serpent, the mad dog, the rusting nail, which have given a painful death to a few persons. But what of this poison of sin which has inflicted such suffering on an entire race for six thousand years? The serpent and his poison should not arouse an emotion of fear compared with that which the mere mention of sin ought to awake in the human heart. And still men do not fear and will not understand. Since death must come to all men they are satisfied to learn nothing from the last sickness, death, and the grave, and they continue in their sins. They continue to tremble before the serpent, while hugging sin to their breast.

3. But if the fear of God's justice, and the warning of death and the grave do not move them to understanding and terror, perhaps the particular punishments of particular sins may rouse them to a sense of

sin. The violations of God's laws are often the violation of our human nature, sins against our natural happiness as well as against the Divine law. In this case nature takes vengeance on her own account. In the same way sins which affect society and particular individuals are avenged by the injured parties. Look around you on the world of suffering in all its forms, and discover the source of so much misery. From hospitals and lunatic asylums, from prisons, from sick-rooms, rises one long terrible wail of pain and despair. Nature, society, and the wronged are avenging the outraged laws of God. The drunkards, the impure, the dissipated, the criminals, the invaders of clean homes, the child-murderers, are paying to society, to nature, to man all that they stole from these powers. The innocent are suffering too, but when we subtract their suffering how much anguish remains which has its root solely in the sins of men. And again, God is merciful, most unwilling that death should surprise us, eager to wake us from the sleep of sin before it is too late; therefore, He sends us the lightning-stroke of unexpected affliction to turn our wandering and benighted thoughts to heaven. The beloved child of the household dies, and broken hearts begin to feel a wider separation than that of the grave, the gulf of sin between them and the child of love; a fortune disappears, and mean circumstances look meaner than the grave when the light of faith shines not on them; and but for sin the child would still be living and the fortune still in the treasury. When we consider all these things, is it possible that we can still have no horror for sin? Could we realize them rightly no day would pass without a solemn

execration for that evil power which has wrought such suffering for man.

III.—The Sense of Sin.

1. And still men can speak lightly of sin, and praise and love it. Even if the lost souls of the great rose from their Infernos to describe the power of sin, it is doubtful if men could be affected seriously toward a pure life. What a discourse could Herod the Little preach in any market-place to-day on the misery sin has inflicted upon him these two thousand years; in what moving accents Pilate and Judas, faithless judge and faithless friend, might describe the long centuries of their vain repentance; in what burning words would not Napoleon relate the long list of consequences which flowed from his evil deeds as the conqueror of Europe; and the commoner princes, the multitude of commoner criminals, the murderers of virtue, the traders in innocence, the wretches that made incomes out of sin, how utterly before their pathetic eloquence, descriptive of their sufferings, would fade into insignificance the masterpieces of Cicero and Demosthenes. Yet none of these things would move men to the detestation of sin for long. "And he said: then, Father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. But he said: No, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will

they believe if one rise again from the dead."—Luke xvi.

2. Unless the grace of God gives to men the sense of sin, no other power will influence them to avoid it. This sense of sin may be likened to the physical sense of cleanliness, or to the natural dread of loathsome disease. With what uneasiness do clean people bear the sensation of dirt on their bodies or garments, with what horror do all men fly from the contagion of small-pox, cholera, or the yellow fever. The sense of sin in a human soul arouses the same horror and urges to the same flight when this pest of the soul appears. This sense of sin was infused into us in our baptism, and carefully cultivated by parents and teachers in our early childhood and youth. Who cannot remember the keen sense and horror of sin which he had in the days of his innocence, when the slightest falsehoods, the most excusable tempers, the lightest disobedience lay on the little soul with more weight than the grievous crimes of later years? Why is it that we do not carry the child's sense of sin into our days of maturity? Because the world cannot afford that we should. And therefore it begins its vile whisperings and insinuations the moment we appear in its arena; that sin is part of our nature, does no permanent harm, both benefits and pleases, has few consequences, is regularly practised by most respectable and eminent people, and, though denounced from pulpits, is the favorite of the world. It is pointed out from numerous examples that the preachers exaggerate all things connected with sin. In the end we follow the world, and the sense of sin dies within us forever.

3. Rarely does it return in its original strength and beauty. Once we have dipped into sins of habit the memory of them is with us to the end, and only the shaking off of this mortal coil relieves the soul of the eternal flavor of the plague. Let us pray, then, for a deep and ever-deepening sense of sin. We have seen its power and its multiplied punishments. Let us not deceive ourselves with false hopes that we shall escape consequences. The man who trusts himself to a rotten bridge deserves his fall. The laws of nature are inexorable, and God will not interfere to prevent their action. The neglectful parent will have bad children to plague his age, the drunkard is certain of a painful life and death, the dissipated die early, the impure are buried in their own terrible quicksand. And at the close of the drama there remains the last sentence to be imposed by justice. "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire." "For the wages of sin is death."

Penance.

Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish.—Luke xiii. 3.

OUTLINE.

1. It astounds us to see the spirit of penance in the sinless Christ and in the saints.
2. While converted sinners have scarcely a tear for their past.
3. True conversion means lifelong regret for past sins.
4. And only through penance can we show that regret.
5. By penance we are saved from the consequences of past and present sin.
6. Corporal penances are good and salutary.
7. But the penances attending the strict performance of duty are better.
8. The rewards given to the contrite of heart.

I.—The Spirit of Penance.

1. Common-sense teaches us the necessity of repairing any injuries we may have done to others. Regret is not enough, there must also be atonement and reparation. Therefore, sinners who have all but extinguished the light of their baptism by steady violation of the law, on their return to a Christian life must feel sharply the need of atoning in some way for their waste of God's graces. The light which the Church sheds on the pathway of its children from birth to death leaves the Catholic without excuse for his wickedness. Pagans may plead their unbaptized condition and poor training; but all the details of Catholic life and training reproach the faithless sinner for his lapses from the right. As we have all sinned with full knowledge of sin, we are bound to make reparation. Thus, the spirit of penance should

be the distinguishing mark of Christian penitents. This is easily understood. What astounds us is the cultivation of this same spirit by our sinless Lord, and such saints as Aloysius, who never lost his baptismal innocence. The fasts and prayers of Jesus amaze us; and the mortifications and penances of Aloysius confound us. What need had the Master and the perfect disciples of atonement and reparation? None. But their love for us, their sense of sin's injustice, their desire to atone for that injustice, urge them to the most painful penances. "Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many."—Heb. ix.

2. In us, who have such need of the deepest spirit of penance, how deficient is the mind and will in this regard. The comfort of converted sinners, whose youth was rottenness, is often appalling. They seem to have become virtuous rather because passion and opportunity disappeared, than through the disgust of a bad life and the desire for a better one. They have utterly forgotten that the seeds of sin planted by them in others have borne many harvests, which are being reaped year after year, and will continue to fill hell's barns long after their judgment. This wild and riotous parent left his children to grow up like savages; he is now comfortably attending mass and frequenting the sacraments, a reformed and sober citizen, while his children are scattered over the land, faithful imitators of his disorders, breeding children even wickeder than themselves; and he is not even conscious of the immense share he must take in the final responsibility for so much evil. This unclean talker filled the mind of an innocent youth with vile images and his heart with lustful desires in one hour's conversa-

tion; from that moment the youth walked the downward road of dissipation, while the sinner who destroyed him has forgotten his crime,—in fact, has never been cognizant of his share in the damnation of his brother.

3. Who shall tell us our forgotten and secret sins with all their lamentable consequences? Who can stretch out a strong hand and stay the march of these consequences before they meet and overwhelm us at judgment? God alone has that power. Moved by fervent prayers, bitter tears, and severe penances, He may convert those whom our example turned into evil ways, or may take from us the fearful responsibility for another's sins. "Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin."—Ex. xviii. "All the people cried to the Lord with great earnestness, and they humbled their souls in fastings and prayers, both they and their wives. And the priests put on haircloths and they caused the little children to lie prostrate before the temple of the Lord, and the altar of the Lord they covered with haircloth. And they cried to the Lord the God of Israel with one accord, that their children might not be made a prey, and their wives carried off, and their cities destroyed, and the Holy Things profaned, and that they might not be made a reproach to the Gentiles. Then Eliachim the High-Priest of the Lord went about all Israel, and spoke to them saying: 'Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord'"—Judges iv. Continuance in penance is only possible when the soul is possessed of the spirit of penance.

II.—Reasons for Penance.

1. The spirit of penance provides us with the particular reasons for doing penance in our own behalf. We must atone for the sins and sinful negligences of the past, that kept us from rising to that high standard of life demanded of the humblest Christian. Mortal sin is like a poison in the blood, which without killing the body outright destroys the fineness of the physical faculties. The sick cannot see, hear, taste, and feel like healthy persons, and their physical enjoyments are thus curtailed. All that they do is tainted with their sickness. It is the same with habitual sinners. The spiritual life is so low in them that no action of theirs but seems tainted with the poison of sin; and they go about the world helping to lower its spiritual vitality by their words and actions and indifference. They must not only atone for the sins deliberately committed, but are bound to do what they can to repair the mischief their sad condition unwittingly caused to others. The justice of God is infinite, and there is no escaping it. The debt we contract through sin must be paid to the last farthing. The injury done to others and to ourselves must be repaired; and at the same time we must not forget the injury done to God by the violation of His commandments, by direct treason to His Son, Jesus Christ. Some of these injustices we can repair, as we pay a debt in money, but others are beyond our powers, as in the case of widespread slander and wasted graces. In such cases God is satisfied with contrite hearts, a pure life, and the practice of

penance. It is all that we are able to do, and that is sufficient to atone for the wretched past.

2. But we must do penance not only to atone for the past, but to protect the present from the consequences of our own and our neighbors' sins. Sin has natural as well as spiritual consequences, and the laws of nature, once outraged, are pitiless in their vengeance. The habit of sin begets a weakness in the will, which sometimes becomes a physical disease, as in the case of drunkards. What painful combats the converted sinner has to endure with his perverted nature! He is often overcome by despair. The miserable children brought into the world by a dissipated parent remain to plague and terrify him by their evil lives long after he has received the grace of true conversion; and in a similar way the evil passions which we generated in our days of sin return to torment our imagination and our bodies when cleanliness of soul has become a second nature to us, and when the mere thought of sin feels like the touch of material filth. We always stand in danger from our neighbor's sins. The calamities that befell the Jewish nation were shared by the innocent and virtuous, who endured the anguish of exile, poverty, and death along with their sinning brethren. We must therefore do penance to escape these consequences flowing naturally from man's violation of the laws of God and the laws of nature.

3. It seems even necessary that innocence shall do penance in order to bridge the chasm that lies between it and virtue. How many have passed out of innocence without entering the house of tried virtue. The animal is always strong in us, even where tempta-

tion is absent. It is a fierce beast and quickly devours both the new and the old travellers on life's road. To tame this beast, to make him the domestic servant where he would fain be the master of the highway, penance is most necessary; and thus the youth whose innocence is scarcely yet conscious of passion, and the men of tried virtue, alike must depend upon the works of penance to keep them true to God. "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish." Finally, charity also compels us to do what we can in making atonement for the sins of others, for the souls in purgatory, for the indifferent, for the unwilling, even for the most hardened sinners, whose debts to justice the saints so often took upon their own shoulders in the hope of saving them. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ." This was the spirit of penance in Our Lord, who gave Himself up as a scapegoat for the sins of men.

III.—How to Do Penance.

1. All things done or borne in a penitential sprit are good and salutary penances, but not all things are to be undertaken without careful consideration. To fast and pray, to give alms, to render service to the afflicted, are possible to all at times; but the duties of our state, ill-health, and poverty may very often make these penances impossible. We are not thereby absolved from doing penance. It is a common experience that many who find themselves unable to fast, give alms, and visit the needy, never do penance in any other form; and it is also not infre-

quent that many make the corporal penances a means of deceiving themselves as to the actual condition of their souls. This latter was the sin of the Pharisees, who seemed to think that their perfect observance of the external features of the law, their long fastings and public prayers, made up for their hidden sins of oppression and pride. In both these cases the spirit of penance is the corrective. It points out to the sick, the poor, the occupied, many ways of satisfying the justice of God, and prevents them from falling into indifference; and it hinders others from making too much of the corporal works of penance, which their condition enables them to perform.

2. A penance open to all, yet of the highest value, though hardly considered as a penance, is the strict performance of duty. Very few dream how much self-denial is involved in the attempt to perform ordinary duties with perfect care and attention. The hearing of Mass, the act of praying, care of the interests confided to us, healthful economy, the maintenance of loving relationships with our own, if they are to be done with decency, require much effort, study, and self-denial. This fact is often overlooked, and in consequence we see penitents of great merit devoted to fastings and prayers and charities, who are sad failures in the matter of performing imperative duties. For parents, therefore, a natural and noble penance is increased devotion to the welfare of their children, and increasing affection for them; for sons and daughters a saving penance would be the practice of perfect obedience; for the young the avoidance of temptation perfectly, and of extravagance, would be salutary penances; for workmen it

would be a penance to show generosity in their care of an employer's interests; for all a saving penance would be to do more than the law demands. That is, hear a second Mass, or attend benediction on Sunday, earn salary or wages well and then throw in a half hour for justice's sake, make acts of resignation in trouble, and then go a step farther and make an act of thanksgiving, again for justice's sake.

3. It is wonderful the regard which God lavishes on sinners who testify to their repentance by doing penance. When the prophet Jonas preached in Ninive, and warned the people that their sins would destroy their city in a short space of time, the entire population with the king at their head did penance in sackcloth and ashes, forcing even the beasts of the field to fast with them; and God not only heard their prayers and forgave them, but His Divine Son used their name in His day to reproach the Jews. "The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here."—Matt. xii. Our Lord also declared: "I say to you that there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just, who need not penance."—Luke v. On the other hand for those who have no use for penance, and can see no need for it in their own lives or the lives of others, God has written down their punishment. "The inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish, and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach."—Eccl. xli. "And I will visit the evils of the world, and against the wicked for their iniquity."—Isa. xiii.

Holy Thursday.

And whilst they were eating, Jesus took bread; and blessing broke, and gave to them, and said: Take ye and eat: This is my Body. —*Mark xiv. 22.*

OUTLINE.

1. We are so accustomed to the ordinary story of the Last Supper as to hear it without special emotion or deep interest.
2. Yet when it is told to us from another standpoint than that of the Evangelists, and in a different fashion, its wealth of interest amazes us.
3. And we realize that this wonderful Last Supper is repeated in the Church as often as Mass is said, and with similar circumstances.
4. The aim of Our Lord in establishing the Blessed Eucharist was that He might forever be physically among men.
5. Henceforward, without His Body and Blood there was to be no spiritual progress for men or for society.
6. Union with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is the most perfect and fruitful union which man can have with God.
7. Through this sacrament the glorious body of the Resurrection has fed the believing part of the human race for twenty centuries.
8. And the human priesthood has had conferred upon it the honor of perpetually repeating for men the sacrifice of Calvary, the glory of Mount Olivet.
9. The indifference of so many sinners to this glorious Presence is as difficult to explain as the treason of Judas.

I. The Last Supper.

1. It is to be regretted that so many Catholics miss the glory of this day, and fail to catch the full beauty of that scene in the supper-hall, when Our Lord gave Himself forever to His brethren. We read the evangelist's description of the Last Supper with reverence, of course, but without any special emotion, such as would stir us if Napoleon or any popular hero were the subject of the story. Christ was God, and for us naturally all other wonders of His life are absorbed in that fact. But they ought not to be obscured.

Their natural and supernatural beauty and sublimity ought to appeal to our minds and hearts and bring us nearer to Him Who was both God and Man. When we lose sight of them, we lose sight of Him in part. He became man that we might understand His love for us better, and might love Him the more easily. All His human side was the expression of the Divine love for us in the ways we can best understand. Therefore, these scenes of His life should be very dear to us, and should be closely and lovingly studied. He took bread and wine, the most beautiful symbols of all human food, as the veil of His wonderful gift to us; He chose the commonest, yet most emphatic ceremony of our social and physical life, the hour of eating, for the granting of the gift; and He made it His last testament, leaving to His children the entire estate which His Father had given Him.

2. Thirteen men sat down in the supper-room to celebrate the religious feast peculiar to the Jewish nation. The thirteen were devoted friends, had been companions for some years in the same enterprise, and were under the command of a leader whose fame had filled the land through the wonders of healing He had done. No idea of disaster, separation, death, crime, tragedy, entered the mind of any man present save one. They were all healthy, young, ambitious, hopeful, proud of their leader and their discipleship, and they looked forward to many years of comradeship, labor, and increasing honor under their Master. How shocked, how horrified, how humiliated, would these confident men have become could they at that moment have seen the darkness and crime of the next twenty-four hours. One had already arranged to play

the part of traitor to his Master before the night passed, and by the morning dawn of the second day would be in his grave a disgraced, an infamous suicide; the beloved Master was to leave the table for the prison, the prison for the tribunal, the tribunal for the scaffold, the scaffold for the stranger's grave, all within the short space of a day; the chief of the disciples was to disgrace himself within a few hours by an act of cowardice; and the others were to fly in terror from the Master they loved, thinking more of their own safety than of His. Never again were these thirteen to sit together in such harmony and love, and each was doomed to a life of hardship, and a death of violence. Look at the scene again under this light, and say if any more strange or awful has been enacted in the history of man.

3. Yet this is the exact truth with regard to the Last Supper, and might be made still more vivid by giving all the strange details connected with the scene. Moreover, it was not to be a scene of the moment, thereafter the mere historical fact; but for all time it was to be repeated among men with an appalling fidelity to the first circumstances. The bread and wine were to be changed continually into the Body and Blood of the Master; the great feast was never to end, and the terror of the disciples, the treason of Judas, the meanness of Peter were to be its mournful shadows in every age; for thus the Mass is offered up to this moment on Catholic altars, while outside rages the same world that plotted about the hall of the Last Supper, ready with jailers, soldiers, prisons, corrupt judges, mad populace, scourge, thorn-crown, cross, and Calvary to do away with Him

Who calls Himself under the veil of the Bread and wine, as once under the veil of the carpenter, the Son of God and the King of the human race. How terrible look the Last Supper and the Mass in this light! What a strange, what a wonderful scene was that which first saw the bread and wine made the Body and Blood of Christ for "the life of the world." Who can look upon the actors seated so calmly about the table, upon the grave Master, upon the pallid traitor, without infinite interest, infinite speculation?

II. The Body of Christ.

1. Men sometimes wonder why Christ gave us such a gift, and it appears to them the strangest that God could offer to man. Many Protestant leaders of thoughtful and pious nature find it impossible to comprehend the Gift. When Our Lord first described It, many of His former disciples found it quite as incomprehensible, and "walked no more with him." They said one to another, as so many say to Catholics in this day, "This saying is hard, and who can bear it." Yet if there be any gift in man's possession more comprehensible than another, it is the gift of self from a lover to the object of his love. "Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one," is the poet's exact and striking description of true and perfect love realized by actual union. When Our Lord established the Blessed Sacrament he achieved the highest expression of the God-Man's love for His people; He gave himself in His entirety to every soul that loved Him; He gave Himself to each one in every age of the world, in every condi-

tion; and thus there could be no favoritism charged against Him, no jealousy on our part, for the slave, the beggar, the outcast of the last century of time stands in the same relation to Him in this sacrament as the Apostle, the prince, the philosopher of the Master's day. He achieved at the same time His own wonderful delight: "My delight is to be with the children of men." It is given to no human lover to bestow himself so completely upon the beloved. Such a power belongs only to God. When the mother has exhausted herself in her devotion to her child, she never comes as near to his heart as the woman whom he makes his wife; when husband and wife are in the most complete accord their union is still subject to death, and their hearts suffer a holy division when the child claims a share of their affection; but the union of Christ and His beloved in the Blessed Eucharist is absolute and perfect, subject neither to time nor death nor any limitation, and is both physical and spiritual according to man's nature.

2. This sweet Body of Christ, therefore, became in a most peculiar and perfect way "the life of the world." For nearly twenty centuries the Christian world has sat at the banquet of the Last Supper, men coming and going by generations, so that the great feast has been continuous. Peter has always been there, and the other Apostles; and Judas has been represented by individuals regularly, by nations at critical times. The old world broke up a score of times, but the Christian era has endured amid all accidents of time and fortune, because Christ has been in its bosom; not merely the Christ of history, of the Sacred Books, of the faith of men, but the Christ

of Nazareth, of Calvary, of Mount Olivet, in His Body and Soul. He has been nearer to this modern world than He ever was to the Judean age. For the meanest island of the remotest oceans is as near to Him in His tabernacle as was Bethany in the days of his loving visitations to the home of Lazarus. Without Him in the Eucharist there is no real progress for any human being or any human society. His Body and His Blood are now the condition of life and happy continuance for man and society. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."—John vi.

3. And what vigorous, buoyant, fruitful life that must be which has its arteries filled with the current that flows in the veins of the Eternal Christ! What an incomparable union! We are touched to tears by the examples of earthly union between devoted beings, we are often in admiration of the perfect union between beautiful inanimate things. The close knitting of the mother to the child of her flesh, of the friend with the friend as between David and Jonathan, have given the orators themes to stir the heart. The pathetic relationship between the rose and the sun, the final result of earth's forces in the sparkling juice of the grape, have inspired the poets in their sweetest and noblest songs. Yet how poor and mean are these beside the union of Christ with His beloved in the Eucharist. It has no parallel, no imitations, no shadows. It is unique, for the Son of God is the only Being of His kind in the universe. "And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow."—Matt. xxvii.

III. The Glory of His Priesthood and People.

1. The astonishing feature of this Gift of Himself to His beloved is that he made it in a manner subject to His priesthood. To the priest He freely committed this power of bringing Him physically among His people, and to no other; and so absolutely, that without the priest there is no established means of securing His beautiful presence in the tabernacle, and of distributing Him among His own. Thus, when the English and German nations banished the priest from their confines, they drove out the Christ of the Eucharist; from their villages and temples He departed, and the light which had illumined them from early times was extinguished. The faith might remain in part, or in its entirety, as in the case of a few faithful families, but the Master Himself, the Body of the Resurrection morning went into exile with His priest. This Sacrament is, therefore, in a special sense the glory of the priesthood, both in its beginning, since it was founded in the presence of the first priests, and in its continuance, since it is a prerogative of the priesthood to bring it upon the altar. Hence, the priesthood is an office as enduring as time and the church, and its chief glory is its connection with the Blessed Eucharist. And for the people the same glory may be claimed, though of a different degree. The vitality and the perpetuity of the Christian people are from Him in this Sacrament; and without His Body and Blood there is no longer any true life or real glory for any nation.

2. How then can we explain the indifference, the

lack of interest, the absence of emotion, which so many Catholics suffer from on this wonderful day, and on every day of the year? What is to be said in defence of men and women with a certain belief in Christ, who can sit in His sacramental presence, year after year, without ever a thought of receiving Him, feeling even repugnance at the thought of communion? They are as inexplicable as Judas in his treason, who betrayed such a Master for thirty pieces of silver! Had he sold the Lord for a kingdom, or the first place in the Roman court, we might comprehend his baseness; but to purchase infamy so meanly, it is beyond us! The neglectful are of the same stripe of meanness. For the laziness and dead indifference of these earthly years, they will probably pay a heavy sum to justice. They hope to receive Him once for all when death claims them. But they can be assured that they who do not recognize His beauty in the vigor of mind and body will hardly recognize Him in the mists and damps of death!

What is Wrong with the Men.

Now there was much grass in the place: the men therefore sat down in number about five thousand.—John vi. 10.

But while the men were sleeping his enemy came, sowed cockle amid the wheat, and went his way.—Matt. xiii. 25.

OUTLINE.

1. Why is it that the average man takes so feeble an interest in his soul?
2. The deep interest men take in the affairs of earthly life.
3. Men lack not in intelligence, vocation, or in the graces peculiar to their sex.
4. Their trouble is that they think there is too much religion, and not enough money in the world.
5. They also think that nature must have moderate indulgence.
6. They do not feel that God keeps a close watch on the course of obscure persons.
7. Convictions of this kind once drowned a world, and destroyed Sodom by fire.
8. God did not make men the superior sex to get from them inferior service.

I. Where are the Men?

1. These questions are asked seriously, because there is to be found among men an indifference to religion for which it is hard to account. The emotional part of religion is left entirely to women, at which we need not wonder; but in repressing religious emotion the men have also learned to repress religion itself in its influence over their hearts. This is wrong to begin with. The church has need of them and they have need of religion. Their strong simple nature does the best work for Christ and the neighbor; and the force of their passions makes the aid of grace a more imperative necessity than for women. They

have souls to save, they have works of grace to do; yet what a tremendous number of them could be advertised as lost; how many could fitly bear on their souls the legend of certain dwellings: vacant, or let to Satan. In all religious gatherings they are conspicuous by their absence. What is wrong with them? where are they assembling in the hours which belong to God?

2. The second question can be answered easily. A round number of them can be found in the disreputable places of the world; in the saloons drinking down health, steadiness, the food and education of their children, the happiness of their homes along with the whiskey; in the gambling-houses, victims to an infernal excitement; in the brothels, slaves of their meanest appetite. Another set can be found in respectable commercial life, so deep in the business of money-making that no time is left for the soul; or in dishonest methods of gain; or in the foul political life of certain circles, which deal in bribery, direct stealing, vote-buying, blackmailing, packing of legislatures, and hidden tyrannies over the helpless. A third set is engaged in the study of atheism and Ingersollism, which is atheism in the mud, in supporting filthy literature, in attending the dirtiest of the æsthetic theatres and art exhibitions, in whittling down their faith to the vanishing point, in studying how far they can go toward scepticism without losing the chance to die well. A goodly percentage is hard at work in making themselves the worst of fathers, husbands, sons, and citizens by any means they can lay hands on. And finally a very large number is so weighty with adipose virtue, respectability, correct-

ness, and the like, that they can neither move themselves, nor be moved by others, to any good work but that of dozing through the formal religious exercises publicly required of every Catholic. God and the earnest look upon them with awe.

II. Has God Neglected Them?

1. One might easily suppose from the universality of their indifference that in creating them God had purposely left them deficient in some respects; but a glance at their habits of life does not bear out the supposition. They have the keenest and most intelligent interest in the art of pleasure-seeking and of money-making; their taste in dress is good; their understanding of athletics, of the training of the body, of sport is remarkable; their success in business is evident; their organizations for all the needs of society, of individuals, of government are marvellous in their adaptation to the particular needs; they are the statesmen, the thinkers, the rulers, the fighters of the world. It is not clear that they are deficient in reason or decency by nature. It may be that God has failed to give them a true vocation in religious matters, and that they are, in consequence, at the mercy of passion and whim. Yet, if so, how do we account for the splendid vocations of history; the calling of Moses and Aaron, of Samuel and Saul, of the great prophets and priests, of the Apostles, of the innumerable priests that are and have been? Why are the great positions of church and state, of art and commerce and the trades, given to men? These positions all presuppose religion, without which they

cannot be properly held. Why is the man made the head of the family and the father of children, if God has not distinctly called him to positions suited to his nature? They cannot be filled by fools or sinners, they need brains, heart, principle; and that man has provided these essentials is proof that the Creator endowed him with a vocation, the vocation of his sex.

2. It is often said by the observant that the restraints of religion and the educative forces it employs are not as strong as youth requires; that the Creator should have given men more of the gentleness of women, if he expected even as much from them in religious fervor. But see the restraints and impulses provided by religion for the boy and the youth before advancing this supposition! What order and peace in the Christian society, what honest laws honestly enforced, what wealth of opportunity, what a regard for public decency! See the homes in which the boy is trained, its baptized parents, guarded by church and legislature, washed by the river of the sacraments, flooded with the spirit of Christian art and literature. Take note of the innumerable influences thrown about the child, the inducements offered him at every stage of his career. It is impossible that any one can accuse the Lord of providing means unequal to the strain which nature and circumstances put on them.

III. Explanation of their Indifference.

1. No, God cannot be made to bear the burden of their indifference. The trouble with the men is that they are worm-eaten by certain popular convictions, which have got into their spiritual blood no matter

how. The elders are convinced first of all that there is too much religion in the world. So there is, too much in one spot, and too little in others; too much in the women, too little in the men. The clean boy who enters the world from the sanctuary of home, ready for a virtuous life, has this whispered in his ear every moment; his father has talked it for years to others, though careful never to say so to his own son; but the people he taught are saying it for him; which is just as well, as the boy will be proficient in indifference within a year. Secondly, men are convinced that it is money, not religion, which makes the mare go. They preach this doctrine to one another until legal dishonesty, that is, dishonesty permitted by the law or the canons of trade, becomes a virtue. And when they hear the denunciation of Christ: "Woe to you, rich;" or that other: "After these things do the heathens seek;" they hear with deaf ears, and a half-breathed conviction that "they didn't know everythin' down in Judee."

2. Men are convinced in the third place that nature must have its way. Youth has riotous passions, and this madness is argument for them that the passions should have at least moderate indulgence until sense and satisfaction bring them back to decency. The sins of the flesh are without reproach, they even carry a certain honor with them; the virtuous are considered inferior, cold-blooded; the sensual are at least secretly commended as bad boys. Christ was of a different opinion when he strengthened His Father's law: Thou shalt not commit adultery. The Apostles were not afraid to write for the heathen world that "neither fornicators . . . nor murderers . . . would

enter the kingdom of heaven." How differently this classification reads from the worldly opinion. Murderers and fornicators on the same level. But men are not so convinced that nature should have its way, when that way involves the honor of their own household, of their wives, daughters, and other relatives.

3. Finally men are convinced that Providence does not take so close a hold of this world, nor deal so severe a judgment as the priests would have them believe. See how many lead the most abominable lives, yet die in their beds after making peace with God; see how peacefully even the sinful die with judgment ahead of them; see the innumerable sinners laughing their way through the world; see the Catholics even that drop into sin and survive it to sin again. But who sees the percentage of these souls that drop into hell? Who stands at the death-beds of shame and despair watching the souls that go out into the eternal darkness? Only the officials, the police, the keepers of asylums and hospitals take note of that sad procession which winds through the gate of death in secrecy to judgment. Remember that mercy is not indifference on God's part, though the indifferent here would have it so. These convictions rule the lives of the indifferent men. Here is what is wrong with them.

IV. The Result.

1. It was convictions of this sort that led to the immense calamities, private and public, recorded and forgotten, which have sent nations, cities, individuals into hell at one stroke. Noah was the only one of his time invited to build a boat of escape; those

whom he invited were too sure God did not interfere with the world so awfully to accept. Lot was the only man warned to leave Sodom with his family, and out of Gomorrha went no living man. There were hundreds of money-seekers in those cities, but somehow their money did not make that particular mare go. In one night death struck twenty-five thousand young Hebrews who sinned with daughters of the Madianites; it would be interesting to hear their present opinion on the need of indulging nature. Nature is much, but the law is more; if it were not, where would the multitudes be? Of what could we be secure if the laws, the certainties, that rule the seasons, the fruitfulness of the earth, the steadiness of civilized society, the moral and the spiritual life of man were at the caprice of such convictions as rule the disordered hearts of the indifferent and the professed sinners? The ten commandments mean just what they say, and hell stands for their violators as truly as heaven for their observers. That God rules the world men are finding out at the rate of forty thousand a day, which is the number of adults probably appearing daily for judgment at the court of the Blessed Trinity.

2. How many men, think you, if their good sense were awakened on this matter, would wait for death and judgment to discover some elementary truths: that religion, for instance, is the only coin good for eternity, that you cannot scrape enough of it together to pay your way while on a sick-bed a brief time, and that while earthly coin may make the mare go here, it will not lift the soul an inch above hell? Petted nature, about whose strength we boast so much, as if

we were its slaves at certain periods in spite of God and reason, turns coward and weakling at the stench of the grave, and carries us no farther. Christ himself has declared that He takes such an interest in the world, that not a hair falls from our heads without His knowledge; how then can we suppose Him indifferent to our sins? What a spectacle then do the men make in their affected indifference to religion! what an injury do they inflict on their vigorous sex! what an insult to the God who made them the superior sex, only to get inferior service from them! The purer the diamond the better it stands the work of the lapidary; the stronger the nature, the higher its special gifts, the more do God and man ask of it. If men should not be found as often in the churches as women, owing to their peculiar avocations and temperament, they should at least be beyond indifference.

The Christian Family.

And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He was subject to them. And His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.—Luke ii. 51, 52.

OUTLINE.

1. The three altars in every church remind men of the Holy Family.
2. Mary and Joseph in their careers are types of the Christian parent, and in their characters models for all fathers and mothers.
3. Yet God demands more of parents than of Mary and Joseph, because Jesus was not dependent on them for His success in life.
4. Christ raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament chiefly for the child's sake.
5. Home is the child's temple, whose priest is the father, whose angel is the mother.
6. Church and State are mainly concerned with protecting parents against the virtue-vendors, who look to each generation for the regular supply of managers and patrons of infamy.
7. Yet too often parents are no more than indifferent teachers, or degraded slave-drivers over their children.
8. The bitter and deserved judgment which awaits the worthless parent.

I. The Standard and the Models.

1. Right and left of the main altar, where reposes the Divine Humanity of Our Lord, stand the altars and statues of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and Joseph her glorious Spouse. So that in all our churches the people have ever before them this touching and imposing reminder of the Holy Family as it once existed in Judea, as it exists to-day in the courts of heaven; and only in Catholic churches are these altars and statues found, or is any honor paid to the noblest souls, the sweetest and holiest family that ever graced this world. You find men ever busy

erecting statues to poets, generals, statesmen, and nobodies, in public places; it is left to the Catholic alone to do God's own family this honor. The highest type of the Christian family is thus represented on our altars; and while Jesus, Mary, and Joseph thus stand united in the common family bond, we shall never want for that standard of excellence, to which the true Christian family should attain. The Holy Family is the model of the Christian family. Its two guardians are the model of all Christians parents. Its history is the common history of the families that make up society. It was poor, humble, ignored, and unknown, sometimes persecuted, during its course; as is the case with the average family, it was subject to sorrow and change; its members passed away one by one to death; its one glory was the virtue of its members; it became immortal through its one glorious flower, the Child Jesus.

2. St. Joseph was a good type of the ordinary man. He was a carpenter, and supported his family by steady labor; nothing positive is known of his birth or his death, neither wealth nor rank was his: which is the history of the common man of every age. But this obscurity did not hinder him from receiving the most wonderful honors from God. Daily he exercised and enjoyed all the tender and beautiful privileges of a father toward the Son of God; held Him in familiar embrace, fed Him, trained Him; died in his arms, with the tears and moans of Jesus and Mary in his ears; and entered Limbo, the glorious messenger of the Saviour to the souls that hungered for His coming, commissioned to tell them all that he had seen and heard as the head of the Holy Family.

In her history the Blessed Mother is a type of the ordinary mother. She was the careful mistress of the home, the loving consort of Joseph, the devoted mother of her Son. Her birth and death are known to us only by tradition; she is effaced before her Child, she is exalted only to make more certain His Humanity. Yet this obscurity did not hinder her from becoming Queen of Virgins, of mothers, of angels; the model of all women and their glory. In all sorrow she was first; in the sorrow of Bethlehem, turned out of the inn; in the sorrow of the flight, turned out of her country; she saw Joseph carried to his rest, stood under her Son's cross, saw Him ascend into heaven, and bore her lonely pilgrimage for many years after her glorious family had passed from the world. She is the Queen of suffering mothers. Her devotion to Jesus, Joseph, and the home of Nazareth is the standard for all women, married and unmarried, in the circle of the home.

II. Parental Responsibility.

1. It may seen absurd to demand of ordinary parents as much as was demanded by God from Mary and Joseph; yet it is certain that He may demand even more. The Son of God was the Prince of Heaven, not dependent on His Mother or St. Joseph for the continuance of His life or the success of His mission; they might have been the most helpless, and sinful, and unworthy of parents with regard to these things. But the ordinary child depends for all things on the parents. He is at their mercy, and they can practically ruin him. To present him a decent citizen to

the state, a decent Christian to Heaven, requires all the care and intelligence of which any parent is capable. Home is the nest of the human race. To understand how much depends upon the parents, follow in imagination the flight of the young birds day after day, all over the world from millions of homes. They go forth to fill the vacant places of those whose flight has passed into eternity; they become the beneficent rulers of the world, the students and writers, the priests and teachers, the business managers, the parents of happy homes, the trainers of the next healthy and religious generation; and passing to their judgment sit down honorably with Jesus in His kingdom.

2. From the same holy nest goes forth another flight marked for a mournful destiny. The dear boys and girls that were once the heart's delight of loving fathers and mothers, but afterward swerved from the path of justice, find their way into the jails, the brothels, the dens of dissipation; they become the defaulters, frauds, robbers, murderers, adulterers, sneak thieves, traitors, that make necessary police, judge, and prison; their lives end in suicide, sin, despair. The priest and the public official, standing at the river of death, alone see their frightful passage over the river, and shudder at the judgment to which they have flung themselves. Keeping these tragedies in mind, any Christian can understand the action of Christ in making marriage a sacrament, and putting it forever into the hands of the Church, forever out of the power of fickle and sensual societies. The Catholic Church for nineteen centuries has cried to the scoffing world, the sensual statesmen, the lustful

law-makers: no divorce. They who marry seek not their own pleasure, but the good of the children. They are not sybarites, but souls vowed to self-sacrifice. Not the king on his throne has sworn a more binding fidelity to his people than they to their state; and no vow that ever bound monk and nun to God's service could demand as much as parental responsibility demands from the father and mother of children. The vow may be dismissed, the king may resign; but the relation of parent and child has no release in nature, and probably none beyond the grave.

III. What the Parents Should Be.

1. Home is the child's temple, and the father is its priest, vowed to loftiest fidelity. From the home altar daily the smoke of his sacrifice must ascend; the sacrifice of his time, labor, thought, prayer; and neither angel nor devil shall lure him one moment from his post. The angel of the temple is the mother, its caretaker, its sleepless guard, counsellor of the priest, and substitute after his death. Between them they watch over the growth of the child, prepare him for his destiny, and keep from him the knowledge and the practise of evil. They are ever on the watch for the demons that seek the home as beasts seek prey, and do battle with every influence that threatens the order and sanctity of home. God has given them an office akin to His own; in a sense they create their children; in consequence they become the human providence of their children. They owe them sound bodies for their hard work in the world; noble predispositions, the inherited taste for the good and

honorable; a suitable training of the mind, a sure training in religion, and a good start in life. Moreover, although the law releases the child from parental dominion at a certain age, and also releases the parent from legal responsibility, no law ever releases father and mother from the protectorate of love. The home should always be open to the child, whether saint or sinner.

2. It is to enable the parent to fulfil his vocation that society is established. For the father and the mother are laws, legislatures, rulers; for them are property and fixed societies; for them are church, sacrament, and priest. Every protection that can secure more powerfully the home against its enemies, and maintain the father and mother in a peaceful routine of labor, is sought for and upheld by the guardians of society. For them sages ponder all their lives, historians write, philosophers study, soldiers fight, priests labor and offer sacrifice. All this is needful, for the enemies of the home are numerous and fierce. Remember that the evil side of society carries on its work with the same exactness and system as is employed by the good. The gambling-hells must have managers and customers when death and the devil have claimed their present proprietors and patrons; the supply of fallen women must never diminish, let death and dissipation do their utmost; the market for hard drinkers, thieves, cheats, fornicators, etc., is the busiest in the world; the courts must be kept busy, and the jails full. Where can all this material be got, but in the homes of the nation? Therefore, these cruel agents of hell stand always at the door waiting for the children of the house! Alas,

what a terrible army of unfortunates fall into their hands, passing thence to rottenness, death, and hell!

IV. Failure and Its Judgment.

1. Where parents are guided by the spirit of God their children are an honor to the race; such as in our time were the Vaughan family in England, the Barbers in America; such as are the thousands of honest souls doing their duty to God and man in every town of the land. Their parents knew the duty, the responsibility, the danger, the need; and, praying for the grace of their state, acted up to grace and knowledge both. Alas for those who were ignorant of all things, or chose to neglect their holy calling; who gave themselves up to pleasure and their own way so as to be the poorest of parents! Bound to give their children sound bodies, they brought to the home bodies rotten with drink and dissipation; owing to the children noble instincts, they conceived them in the passion of lust and drink, and tainted the innocents from the very womb. The example of the father and the mother was the daily quarrel, the irritation of spent nerves, the ungovernable rages, the frequent drink stupor, the periodical spree. The parents being slaves of drink, or temper, or selfishness, the children became slaves of the same masters, and led lives of riot and disorder; forced to work early that the passions of the parent might be fed; deprived of their youth in infancy and made old at once; never knowing the father unless as the master who beat them, and who had time only to spend upon himself the money they had earned, fleeing from the

home as from a prison in the end; without a single memory of the parent, but that of shame and horror. Such homes, such parents are only too numerous, and they breed the material for the world's sad refuse. What better result could be looked for from parents who were to their children truly the devil's example, protection, providence?

2. What must be the judgment of these faithless guardians of the souls of the little ones. God Himself has stated it: I will require the souls of the children at the hands of the parents, saith the Lord. That is enough; not at the hands of the priest, of the ruler, of the lawmaker, of the tempter, but of the father and mother; and the whole world is glad to be rid of that heavy responsibility. Why? For twenty years the parent has the child close to his very heart, ready, willing, loving to be shaped into any form by the hands of the two beings nearest and loveliest in his eyes of all the people that live. They could have made him a saint, yet to-night he is buried in hell, the hell of this world's shame, or the hell of eternity. And his soul cries for justice against the indifference which destroyed him. Not a doubt but he will get that Divine justice. Woe to those false souls who are to meet it! The mountains would rest more easily on their bodies than the hand of God, directed by the prayers of lost children, shall rest upon their souls, traitorous souls, in well-deserved judgment.

Prayer.

And he spoke a parable to them, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.—Luke xviii. 1.

OUTLINE.

1. Prayer is the food of the soul, and also the chain by which we bind ourselves to God.
2. By it we acknowledge His goodness and power, and our own dependence and need.
3. Yet how few pray with intelligence or heart, except in times of danger.
4. To pray well we have only to think of the escapes of the past, the dangers of the present, the uncertainties of the future.
5. Or, to remind ourselves of the world's prisons and hospitals, and their suffering and often guilty inmates.
6. Prayer is the common vocation of all and by it the most obscure person can achieve wonders.

I. The Obligation and Necessity.

1. Christians know the obligation of prayer in general, because they have been trained from babyhood to address the Almighty Father in the commoner forms; it would not be safe to say, however, that the majority feel the necessity upon which that obligation rests. It is amazing to what culture and intelligence Catholics will often raise themselves without getting a glimpse of the reasonable necessity, not to speak of the beauty and consolation, of true prayer. They can read the forms in an excellent manual with appreciation of the taste and spirit and genius which dictated such prayers, they can understand the need of deepest earnestness in prayer for delivery from immediate danger; but to think of it as a food of the soul, as a vivifying current of all our actions, as necessary

to the soul as thought is to the mind, or exercise to the body, one must not look for such a spirit too often.

2. This is all the more curious when we remember that prayer is, from the standpoint of our share in our own salvation, the chief means of union with God. Although we have many relationships in this world, the one of transcendent importance is with God; we are His, and He is ours in a sense more absolute than can be said of any other relationship. In the moment of our creation we stood alone with Him; each moment of life is so completely His gift, and so little dependent upon others, that we still stand alone with Him; in sickness and death, when all relationships have faded from our horizon, once more we stand alone with Him; finally at the judgment seat what other shall stand between us save our own sins, and the claims we may have given to hell over our souls; and even in the infernal kingdom we shall still hold with Him the last relationship of our career, outraged father, dishonored son. This intimacy is the basis and the reason why life must be one grand prayer.

3. Since we are reasonable beings and possess free will, God will have us use these noble endowments in our intimacy with Him. They are the gifts which make us like to Him. He will have us study Him, our Friend, as one friend studies another, and then break forth into expressions of love and admiration for His beauty; we must study ourselves by the lights of faith and reason, and then send out most earnest petitions that the littleness and unworthiness we have discovered may not intervene between us and Him; recognizing the favors showered upon us, we

must thank Him daily for His goodness; and seeing the dangers which beset our pathway, we must ask for His special help at all times. These efforts of reason and will are our share in the work of salvation, the only tribute He demands of us as Father and Friend; and unless we use them to a sufficient extent in life, we shall certainly miss the life eternal.

II. The Average Fulfilment of the Obligation.

1. It is humiliating to observe the manner in which so many Christians obey this necessity of prayer. Once a day the year round the majority fall upon their knees to offer up hastily or sleepily, often in mortal sin and without the sense of their condition, the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, and the Act of Contrition, which to recite respectfully takes about two minutes; one-half the mornings of the year they forget them; at Mass on Sundays the prayers of the book are read; in Lent a few public devotions are attended; in moments of fear and danger some hasty petitions are offered up; all which is their quota of prayer in the average year. When it is added that habit alone controls these prayers in good part, that neither heart nor mind has much share in them, that they are often said with irreverent haste, without sorrow for sin, and with a tacit determination to continue in well-loved sin—one can estimate how effectively such prayers fulfil the obligation.

2. As for the higher forms of prayer, meditation, and contemplation, what a small percentage of the gifted ever practise them, or so much as know their names! The ignorant can be excused from their

practise, yet the ignorant are often better experienced in them than the intellectually superior. But there seems to be no knowledge of the distinctive kinds of prayer among those best fitted by intelligence and mental training, by habits of study and reading, for their exercise. They can speculate in a philosophical or flippant spirit on doctrine; they can enjoy the clever pages of "Dion and the Sibyls," or of "Ben Hur," and shed tears over the touching descriptions of scriptural scenes in the life of the Saviour; but they are unable, because ignorant or unwilling, to speculate in the presence of God on these same doctrines, or to call up the scenes of the Master's life and leave it to the Holy Spirit to touch the fount of tears and to leave indelible impressions. Still, the unlettered and the cultured, the fool and the sage, alike understand the use of prayer in moments of sharp necessity. When death and sickness threaten, or fortune slips from the fingers, or any calamity approaches, prayer falls naturally from lips that have no fluency at other times, bended knees are no longer painful, the providence of God stands like a mountain to minds who once saw there only a mole-hill. Yet there is something nearly ridiculous in the skill and fluency of such moments, when compared with the dumb-ox habits of the past; and there can always remain a suspicion that such prayers lack that directness in their course to God's throne, which marks the arrow of the skilful archer to its mark.

III. The Secret of Successful Prayer.

1. This ability to pray in the hour of threatening danger points out the way to learning the art of suc-

cessful prayer. There is in too many of us a half-scepticism as to the success of prayer. We all know that the saints had no difficulty in getting what they asked for, which we put down to the fact of their sanctity; yet it was to all who loved Him, who called to Him in love that Christ made the promise: "If you shall ask the Father anything in my name He will give it you." We shall have no difficulty in praying with fervor, often and well, if we feel our necessities, spiritual as well as temporal, if we see the numberless reasons for extraordinary gratitude on our part, if we apprehend the dangers which lie around us, if we gauge the value and the power of direct and loving appeal to God. Two prayers rise almost naturally to every thoughtful heart: the prayer of gratitude and the prayer of petition; in other words, thanks for what we have received, humble asking for coming necessities. It is not always clear to the hasty, immature minds of men that they have reason to be thankful for any more than the ordinary favors of living. Yet if one but looks back over that road which he has travelled, whether for twenty or for two score years, the mere sight of the wrecks that lie in its shadows will send him to his knees in heart-broken gratitude; for before him are the skeletons that once were his comrades, whom early death, or drunkenness, or apostasy, or lust, or avarice, or madness, or sorrow hurled from the pathway. The look ahead brings a thousand petitions to the lips; for no eye can pierce the gloom of the road, whose sure ending is death, in whose turns lurk sin, Satan, and the beasts which ever lie in wait to rend the incautious traveller. In the years that are to

come what can hinder for us a fate such as overtook so many more generous than we have ever been?

2. It is astonishing to hear so many say that they do not know what to pray for, can think of nothing when they get on their knees, but must run to the prayer-book. Look around; see the jails, hospitals, insane asylums, poor-houses crowded with inmates. Open the journals: read the various accidents, crimes, and the like in their columns. The victims of these calamities are human beings like yourselves. Why should they be chosen for disgrace, suffering, humiliation, and you be left in honor and health? Many a time you gave God as great a reason to desert you. Pray with violence that none of these horrors may touch you or yours. Pray that the suffering of this world may get the strength and consolation which their condition requires; and as suffering is never at an end, when need you leave your knees as its various forms pass before you? Stand at the bedside of the sick and dying in imagination, and let your fervent petitions, your streaming eyes attest to God your sense of pity and brotherly love, prayer reaching where your willing hands could not. This is prayer. It can be carried on in all times and places, at the Mass, in all public services, in the streets, at work, everywhere.

IV. The Common Vocation.

1. Prayer, in fact, may be called the common vocation of all men. It is not only the special means by which every man secures God's grace for himself, but for the most of men it is the only means of helping their brethren. What each one can do for all in

actual help is next to nothing. The millions in the world are beyond us. Neither time, nor space, nor talent suffices for much beyond ourselves; but through prayer we reach every soul on the face of earth. One earnest petition for the suffering falls like balm on every bruised heart, like healing on every wounded body. One prayer for the sinners may turn a thousand from their evil ways. One prayer for the unbaptized infants may get for many the grace of baptism; one prayer for the dying may open the closed gates to the unrepentant. Thus we establish by constant prayer for the people a real and glorious relationship with souls we know not now, but who will surely thank us in eternity. Nor is this the limit of our glory. Though not called to preach the gospel as priests of the altar, what a mission is open to us in prayer for the success of the laborers in the vineyard! Who can say what splendid results might spring from daily prayer in behalf of the Pope on the throne, of the bishop in his diocese, of the preacher in his pulpit? What consolations might not be showered on the missionaries in remote lands, hidden islands, mournful solitudes, from the petitions of sympathetic hearts! What spirit, courage, inspiration might not the great thinker of the church receive from the prayer of a simple soul unable to learn, but respectful of knowledge. So that in actual influence for good the faithful petitioner might not be inferior, might really be superior, to many a prince of the church, through the numberless graces secured for the workers in the vineyard.

2. And without yielding in the slightest to enthusiasm and its extravagance, it can truly be said that

the man of prayer takes his place beside the throne of God, and like a great counsellor has a share in the government of the world. The world is not so large or so intricate in its course that a lively mind would not be able to understand and follow its daily development. The Divine will directs its movement. What hinders that fervent prayer should not avert disaster from one nation, bring peace to another, stability to a third? Thus prayer ennobles the common life of common souls; for if it be nobility to share in the government of the world, in a permanent and useful position, if it be nobility to dispense immense charities among the suffering, then the man of prayer is noble beyond the patents of men. God Himself has lifted him to a glory. "The prayer of the just man availeth much," is His own declaration. And Tennyson expressed the human sense when he wrote:

"More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of.
Wherefore let thy voice rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If knowing God they raise not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those that they call friends.
For so the great world round is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Priestcraft

The Lord hath sworn and he will not repent: thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.—Psalm cix.

OUTLINE.

1. The word priestcraft was invented to express a power misunderstood and hated by unbelievers.
2. The priest is a mystery to them, to the student of history, even to his own family.
3. Yet he is only a human being, and on this fact men have sought to destroy him and to root him out from among men.
4. They forgot that his order is from God, necessary to society, and indestructible.
5. Therefore men war upon the priesthood of Christ in vain.
6. It is the glory of the people that they have produced him.
7. Their first, last, and tenderest memories are connected with him in all life's important concerns.
8. Though particular nations may lose him, he cannot disappear entirely from the earth.

I. The Priest a Mystery.

1. The word priestcraft was invented to express a power not well understood by the general world, which does not admit the necessity of any priesthood, and looks upon the priest as a mere hunter of place and honors. It is supposed to express the methods by which priests in every age, both the impostor and the representative of God, held their influence among the people. Therefore its meaning is one of scorn. It implies imposture and fraud. Whether used with reference to the ancient world, or directed against the Christian priesthood, atheistic philosophers intend it to describe a parasitical growth of human nature, so inveterate that no age has been without it from the

beginning, no race has escaped it, no cure has been discovered for it. Its most powerful form has existed in the Catholic body. Its most vicious representative at any time has been the Pope of Rome, who troubled the reign of Roman emperors as bitterly as to-day Pope Leo troubles the schemes of the philosophers. The ancient tyrant could not remove his spiritual competitors by torture, death, vigilance, or statecraft; the modern conspirator is helpless before the amiability of Pius IX., Napoleon stumbles over the helplessness of Pius VII., a crowd of furious theorists, backed by Bismarck, Palmerston, Gambetta, Crispi, are no match for Leo the Pacificator. The last named carries out his policy of success against the world as did his predecessors. This success is called priestcraft.

2. The average priest is a mystery to non-Catholics. Their own ministers or ethical teachers are an explicable class. They preach the Gospel or the rules of right conduct at their pleasure, and failing to achieve real success, or seeing higher honors in other ways, they retire to more suitable labors. The priest is a priest forever. The average man sees him on the streets, and turns to look at him again. He has heard of him as the devoted attendant of the Catholic people; stories of his fidelity in sickness and trouble and disaster have reached him; he is known to hear the private confessions of sinners, secrets pouring into his ear that no other may know until judgment. In his public functions he is arrayed with curious and inexplicable splendor, surrounded by dignified forms, his approach and departure marked by music and ceremony as if he were a king.

His training is known to have been peculiar and severe, his celibate life is regarded as monstrous or hypocritical. Nevertheless he is followed and sustained in life by the love and respect of his people; he is an influence for good, felt even by the indifferent, and the wicked dread his opposition. For the average man these simple details are mysterious. To him the priest is a puzzle, a problem.

3. Even students of social and religious ideas and forms are puzzled to account for him. The more closely they study his course the more are they amazed and bewildered. He appears to them first in his training as a Levite, under able teachers making the studies and preparation which will fit him for ordination; they see the tremendous exactness of the ordination ceremony, its real beauty and power; and the earnestness of all concerned is their wonder. They follow him among the people, watch him baptizing, confirming, confessing, offering up the Mass, feeding the people with Divine Bread, marrying, and anointing, preaching with authority, admonishing, warning, condemning. They see him part of an immense and unconquerable system, beginning with the Pope and ending with the sub-deacon, bound by vows never to be recalled, pledged to a work which in theory can never end, a soldier who must fight against any odds, never give quarter, never accept it, never surrender, entering the struggle with evil only to conquer or die. They see him multiplied and varied to suit all conditions and sorts of men, all needs, all times and places. Finally, most curious of all their observations, his type seems to be imperishable, as no means of destroying him, though a thousand have

been tried, has yet been discovered; and the slaves upon whose incredible weakness or stupidity he is supposed to thrive, whose freedom is said to be his hinge of power, love him, submit with affection to his exactions, and are as interested as himself in keeping his species alive. To the acutest student the priest is no less a mystery than to the unlettered.

4. He is even a mystery to the household in which he was born and bred. From the beginning he seems to have been set apart from his brethren. He might have had no physical or mental superiority over them, might have been inferior in fact; his childhood and youth were as theirs in the natural order, he was as merry, as fickle, as headlong, as sportive; but for him the things of God had a stronger attraction; what others saw to respect and admire, he saw to love and long for; when he spoke on such matters his own wondered at the spirit of his words and the strength of his understanding; he made them feel, perhaps long before the idea had touched his soul, that the call had been given him, and the Master was drawing him to His service. Little by little he drifted away from them, and they saw him going with tears and joy, as Mary the Mother saw her beautiful Son go forth to His mission from the home He had so honored and was leaving forever. They would not keep him. They could not follow the paths his understanding trod. They only knew the justice and honor of his going.

II. The Mystery Explained.

1. And yet at best the priest is no more, no less than a human being. He has the features and the

faults of his race, and the limitations of his training are strong in him. As the family which gave him to the church was good or indifferent, coarse or refined, clever or heavy-witted, so will he probably be; as his school, college, seminary, and diocese influenced him, these influences he will display in his work. In one age his order will be superior, in another inferior, both in mental and spiritual gifts; in one nation it will thrive, in another disappear. This has always been so well known that his enemies have based their plans for his destruction on the fact that he is a human being with human inclination to fraud; that he has his price, or his frailty, and can be bought off, or tempted to annihilation, or frightened into obscurity, or simply murdered wholesale at maturity, if not promptly killed in the Herodian style. And although all these plans have been tried, and new ones are daily patented, the process goes on because his human nature still continues, and human nature is a weak and perishable thing.

2. What the statesmen and his opponents have refused to take into account is that his priesthood is not from himself; and its powers, their influence, the strength which accrues to him from them, are things over which he has no absolute control. It is not his craft which makes him a giant. There are craftier men and classes than he and his to whom centuries of opportunity, of cunning, of control brought not a tithe of his influence with all their efforts. His power is from God, and so the people believe. Kill him, and they at once seek another with the same mission. To destroy the priest you must really destroy the people, or their faith in God. The people gave him

to God, but they could not confer upon Him his extraordinary powers. It was Christ who chose and honored him. That he forgives sins, offers up the awful sacrifice, approves and condemns, receives souls into the church, and dismisses them from earth, is everywhere along the road to eternal life, at the font, in the home, in the assembly, in the senate, at the marriage, beside the sick-bed, and finally at the exit from the world, is all due to the commission received from His Master. If that Master was the King of earth and heaven then is this priest what he, and he alone, claims to be; if Christ was a fraud then it is only necessary so to prove Him to destroy the priest forever.

3. What is of God men cannot destroy, as old Gamaliel told the Sanhedrim long ago. There is no element of modern social life which has so persistently endured, improved, and developed, in the face of the most extraordinary efforts to destroy it, as the Christian priesthood, the only priesthood of the civilized world. "I am not judged by your day," said St. Paul. His statement was not a prophecy. It was a principle of modern social economy. Hence men war upon the priest in vain. They turn his seminaries into stables, and drive him out; and the inevitable malediction of Christ falls upon them, as a consequence of the injury to an integral part of the social system. It is unnecessary that angels should be specially sent to scourge the persecutors. They drive the seminarians into the army with the vile purpose of making them libertines, and the young men convert the army; they reject Baptism, and turn the priest from the Christian pulpit, forgetting the solemn

declarations of Christ on these very sins; they drive him from his flock, and when the wolves of rapacity, of lust, of avarice, of general lawlessness rush in and devour the people, their legislation, their armies, their police are powerless to save. On all these matters Christ has delivered His judgment. No matter how the old world got along without Him, it is certain that the new will suffer and die by rejecting Him. The priest becomes a mystery only when men deny him his rightful place in modern society.

III. His People's Glory.

1. It is the happiness and the glory of the people that they have produced him. That he is mysterious to the world is only the result of his excellence. The plane upon which he lives is the supernatural; Christ has placed him there. He is so far above men, that one portion cannot understand him, the other regards him with the deepest hope and love. He is the rallying-point in all danger for them. Before they can be robbed of their faith, or their liberties, or invaded by the robbers of men, he must be destroyed, or stupefied, or deceived. It is to win the people from him, that clever men have invented the word priestcraft, and pretend to pity the victims of his cunning, the poor slaves overtaxed to minister to his immoralities. Others cry out that they will take their religion from him, but not their politics; as if he were the saint in one thing, and the cheat in the other. Both within and without the church every effort is made to separate him from the people, either to destroy him, or to enslave them.

2. That the attempt is not altogether foolish the

history of individual nations makes certain. The priesthood of England disappeared before cunning persecution, bloody enough, indeed, but marked more by the tyranny of king and noble, than by blood. As out of the individual heart can go all respect for the priest, so can it go out of a nation's heart. But out of the world the priest goes not until the second coming of the Master. Nor even out of a nation while his vocation rules his life, let laws, tyrants, schemers work as they will. For the place of the true priest is in the love of his people, which neither king nor legislature can destroy. Their first, last, tenderest memories are connected with him. It was he who poured the saving waters on the little head whose pillow is now in the green churchyard; his blessed hands led the little one to the confessional, to the altar of the first communion; his voice first stirred the innocent heart to true, conscious love of Jesus; he blessed the lovers entering the married state, and walked with them in the joys and sorrows of many a year; his appeal won the careless sinner, his reproof turned the wayward back to right, his consolation dried the tears of the penitent. And who can forget that it was upon his name the dying called when the last agony had seized them; that their mournful eyes turned from all others to look upon this messenger of hope, as he entered the death-chamber bearing the Lord; that his absolution, his anointing, his prayer, and whispered word brought peace and resignation to the tortured heart; that his last blessing dismissed our beloved to the bosom of eternal rest; that his were the last kind and hopeful prayers uttered over the grave of our dearest and best.

3. It is his office to still the storms of passion as Christ in the ship calmed the tempest, and relieved the distressed disciples. What Christ did then, what the great Pope has done before our very eyes in these troubled years, the same lies within the power of the humblest priest to accomplish for those who call upon him. Each in his sphere does the work of Christ. If he does not perform miracles in the physical order, his power is almost unlimited in the spiritual order; and it is the business of all believers to make the highest demands upon that power; and so to secure peace in their hearts, order and happiness in their homes, strength in adversity and sorrow, guidance against the multiplying dangers of prosperity.

The Four Last Things

In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin. — *Ecclus. vii. 40.*

OUTLINE.

1. It is the duty of reasonable beings to keep in mind these four things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell.
2. The world is interested in dulling our minds to these features of our destiny.
3. The Holy Spirit alone can so impress them on our fickle minds as to make sin impossible for us.
4. The world pretends to meet death gayly, but Our Lord found it bitter enough to institute a special sacrament for soothing its anguish.
5. The world makes merry over judgment, yet the Judge is incorruptible, fearfully just, and His sentence is eternal, irrevocable.
6. The world makes merry over finding good company in hell, but good company never yet so much as eased a toothache.
7. The world makes merry over heaven, and even Catholics find little comfort in the thought of it.
8. Serious consideration of these last things should not be put off until age has chilled, or disease weakened us.
9. The boat which must cross the Atlantic is not built a day, or even a week, before the voyage begins.

I. The Grace to Remember.

1. Death and judgment await every human being; they are the absolute certainties of human destiny, and the result of the judgment will be heaven for some souls, hell for others. Heaven is worth the winning, and, if it were not, hell is surely to be avoided. Therefore, it is the part of reasonable beings to consider always these four things, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell, which the learned call the Four Last Things, and to give them their full and natural influence on human lives. They are inevitable circumstances in each career, the critical incidents for immortal souls, and to approach them unprepared or

blinded, as so many do, is to play the fool and not the man in life's great drama. The actions of daily life, the words, thoughts, desires, the schemes and plans of ambition and selfishness, the very character of men, all have a new and startling complexion when seen in the light of the four last things. Most of us live in an atmosphere of self-deceit in things of the soul. Our sins are made little and natural, our indifference is passed off as commendable hardihood, and excuses are promptly found for our frequent delinquencies. But the moment death turns on its awful light the mists of deception roll away, and we stand in horror before our own folly, affrighted at the number and gravity of our sins.

2. Satan and the world are, therefore, interested in keeping away all consideration of these important and inevitable facts from human minds. They feed the soul with opiates like these. On Death: why should the young or the vigorous trouble themselves about that which is so far off, which comes so naturally to all men, and which, if considered too often and seriously, would destroy the pleasure of life? On Judgment: why worry about it, when God is so good and man so weak, that it would be a reflection on His mercy to imagine Him judging with the exactness and severity of human judges? Heaven: very likely it is a beautiful place, and it is to be hoped we shall get to it, but at present earth is quite good enough for us, and its affairs engross our time and interest. Hell: it is a favorite topic with the preachers, and a grewsome place, but if we are to go there, what use to worry, while we have the consolation of knowing how great and fine a crowd will accompany us; and if it

comes to a question of fact, who knows anything about it anyway? These are the opiates with which Satan, the world, and interested teachers feed the multitude. They really stupefy millions until the last moment. These millions come to the great crises of their careers as ignorant and unprepared as lambs to the slaughter.

3. Even the thoughtful, who often meditate on the last moments of man, fail to be properly impressed thereby. Because the grace to be impressed even by deep meditation is a supernatural thing, and must come directly from God as a gift. We smile at the sight of St. Jerome, so overcome at the thought of judgment, that he beat his wasted breast with a stone until the blood came, because of his sins. We wonder what glory St. Paul saw with eyes of faith that he counted all things of earth as mere dirt compared with it. We read the Saviour's descriptions of hell with secret scepticism. We almost laugh at the story of one man who read the line of Scripture, "It is appointed for all men once to die," perhaps a score of times, and at the twentieth reading fled in horror to the desert to prepare for the trial which comes to no man more than once. Yet here is seen the difference between mere mental consideration on these things, and the grace of knowing and feeling their true value by the light of the Holy Spirit. It should be our unceasing prayer to "remember our last end" with so vivid and soul-penetrating a remembrance, that grievous sin would truly become impossible to us.

II. Right Use of the Grace.

1. There can be no doubt that the baptized receive the grace to remember the last end not once, but many times. The duty of remembrance is preached in the Christian home, in the pulpit, in the preparation for first confession, and first communion, at confirmation, at retreats and missions, in books and journals, and in the thousand incidents of daily life. But it would seem that the very profusion in which this grace is offered is one of the reasons why so many make no use of it. Ears grow hard to the oft-repeated tale, and uneasy minds turn with relief to the opiates against the pain of remembrance; so that even the just must watch themselves in this regard, and often force their comfort-loving natures to stand face to face on occasions with the facts of death and judgment, heaven and hell. This is simply using the grace of remembrance. It is a necessity. Every human being feels certain of a long life even when fatal disease has claimed him; the Christian must counteract that fatal sense of security by observing the youthful multitudes that daily hurry to death. The habit of sin is acquired by losing the sense of sin's deformity, and we grow so accustomed to it that in time our greatest enemy becomes our dearest friend; to avoid this calamity gaze upon sin in the sad light of death. Sinners are only too ready to deceive themselves with the hope that death is an easy matter since the whole human race must suffer it, and does suffer it with unexpected calmness; yet when one recalls that the Lord of life and death found the last moments so try-

ing to human nature as to establish a special sacrament for the strengthening of the dying, can there be any doubt of the real anguish of the last end?

2. The world makes merry with judgment. The same world sinks in horror before the courts of men, where clever advocates, bribes, influence, can delay and often turn aside justice. What chance does the court of Christ offer for the advocate and the briber? The stupidest mind can brush away with ease all the fine sophistries, make hideous the gross pleasantries, spent in belittling the last account, by standing for one instant before the throne of God, somewhat as it shall stand in judgment. Who shall deceive, befog, influence, blind this Judge? What advocate will face Satan successfully, or pick flaws in the divine law, or delay divine justice? Who will spirit away these witnesses, destroy these records? What friends will gather about us to awe the officers of the law, to comfort us, to diminish the sentence, to make pleasant the prison? Alone with our sins and their awful consequences, desired by Satan, without a friend save the mercy of God, how foolish, how savage, how blasphemous appears then and now the senseless merriment of men over the judgment.

3. The world makes merry with hell. Not only the pagan world, but the thoughtless part of the Christian world besides. Yet here again a moment's pause before that abode of the lost kills the laugh on the lip, and silences the foolish word. Though we are still out of it, can we say this happiness will last another day? Is it not only too certain that at this moment our sinful habits are dragging us closer and closer to the pit which now we ridicule, and that if

death called us to-day it would be to enter the home of eternal grief? A few fools pretend to count on the number and excellence of the company they will find in hell to render their long stay pleasant. Misery loves company, but when did company begin to act as an anodyne. Not even the presence of the Pope can relieve an aching tooth. The hospital patient looks to the physicians, not to the company of his fellow-sufferers, for relief. How then will numbers and dignitaries lessen the sorrow of hell? The mention of hell should excite but two sentiments in us: pity for its inhabitants, horror of sin. The first can do them no good, it will teach us to respect their misery; the other will send us to our knees, to confession for pardon.

4. The world makes merry over heaven, and asks ironically for particulars of its advantages. Even good Catholics have the hope, rather than the certainty, that it will end all sorrow and make up in some unknown fashion for the loss of earthly life, and separation from their beloved. They forget that the God who made the beautiful world as man's temporary residence, also made heaven as his eternal home; and that the beauty of earth is but a shadow of heaven's beauty. They forget His own declaration, "The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the glories of my dwelling-place." Therefore, the thought of heaven should be the comfort of the sick and the aged, the protection of the young, the dream of the worker in the vineyard, the stimulus and the ambition of all Christians. Like a drink of water in the desert should be the thought of this home to the worn travel-

lers of earth; and while death and judgment teach us to keep a sharp eye on the accounts of the soul, and hell gives us a mortal horror of sin, the remembrance of heaven will soothe our anxieties, and cheer our dark moments.

III. Rejection of the Grace.

1. Many Christians take comfort in putting aside these serious considerations, to accept the pagan method of regarding death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Pagan poets love to picture death as the end of a summer day, and the life hereafter as wrapped in a gloom which argues inconvenience rather than positive suffering for its people. How easily they forget all the sad consequences of such teachings. The poets have the end of the summer day to themselves, for death is awful to man, and he meets it as a calamity in spite of poetry. Not so with the other three. If without strong and positive beliefs, he looks to dodge the results of sin; if a Catholic, he hopes against hope to find a mercy which will crown him, sins and all, or at least diminish the terrors of judgment and hell. Thousands of Christians practically reject the grace to remember their last end in this way, and pass through much of life without one serious and useful meditation on the four last things.

2. Perhaps there is pleasure in ignoring the disagreeable until it is thrust upon us; but what if you must choose between disagreeables all the time? The man who daily considers his last end will never sin, though he suffers from his meditations; the man who refuses to think of the end until it arrives, finds himself at death with a rich harvest of sin to reap,

and only the memories of the happy days that were without thought of judgment. It is plain that the advantage is with the former. It is good sense if you are to cross the Atlantic and must build your own boat, not to delay preparation until the day before departure. The sinner caught by death unprepared suffers more anguish in one instant as he sees with the eye of faith what awaits him, than the holy soul whose life was shadowed by its destiny ever suffered in the whole of its faithful career.

The Holy Name of Jesus.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.—Matt. i. 21.

OUTLINE.

1. Catholics are often accused of childishness in their love of Christ.
2. There can be no puerility in true love.
3. Love for the name of Jesus is love for Himself.
4. The power of a great name over the imagination.
5. The power of a loved name over the heart.
6. The power of a home name over the emotions.
7. The awful power attached to the name of Jesus.
8. The pride with which His followers utter It.
9. The love which has honored It from the beginning.

I.—The Feast of the Holy Name.

1. A common charge against Catholics, and a rather glorious one in fact, is that their love for Christ has become utterly childish with time; that the simplicity of love has been sacrificed to the fantasies of saints and peoples, and instead of worshipping the true Christ, Catholics have lost sight of His Divine Person in a multitude of human conceits, and are worshipping His garments, cross, names, and physical perfections. Thus, our critics point to the public devotion to the Precious Blood as an instance of their charge; then to the devotion to the Sacred Heart, to the Holy Face, so popular in France, and to the devotion paid to the garments of Our Lord, the instruments of His Passion, the *Santa Scala* in Rome, and other memorials of Him. Among the sects no such

devotions are to be found. They have not worried over the true cross, they hardly believe that anything belonging to the Christ of Judea is in existence, they ridicule the crusades and their object of rescuing the Holy Land from the hands of the infidel. They claim that they worship Christ in His simplicity, unadorned by Oriental gewgaws, and reverence all things relating to Him in reverencing Him alone.

2. Nature condemns their contention and commends us. The mother not only loves her child, but everything that has touched him: his childish garments, his toys, his old schoolbooks, photographs of his infancy, his youth, and his age. The country cannot get too many personal memorials of Washington, and has built museums to hold them; his uniforms, his letters, his swords, his furniture, his pictures; a handkerchief stained with his blood would be a highly prized relic; artists are never tired securing the various paintings of his fine face and figure; and pilgrimages are made to his home of Mount Vernon, where everything is preserved as he left it, for the veneration of the patriotic. Many a hero, whose body rested far from his native land, has sent home the heart which loved his country to death; and the people have thought it honorable to pay public respect to this precious relic of their brave defender. What is all this but the natural expression of man's affection? And how completely it justifies Catholic devotion to our Lord and all the trifles connected with Him! It can be questioned if they are trifles. There is no puerility in true love. The old legend tells us that Our Lord often rose in the night to make sure that His Apostles were covered from the

damp night air. In the Gospel itself we are assured that He cares for us even to the hairs of our heads, which are all numbered. It is the characteristic of true and deep love that nothing connected with the object of love can be trifling or uninteresting to the lover.

3. Here, then, is the justification of Catholic devotion to all things connected with Our Lord and His Saints. This feast of His Holy Name gives us the opportunity to display our deep love for Him in a different fashion from the feast of the Precious Blood, for instance. The name is the man. It is the summing up in one word of all that he is to himself and to us, it is his essence. It covers all that he has been to us in the past, and it will signify all that he may be to us in the future. When human emotion has exhausted language, look, and gesture to express love for another, we murmur over and over the name of our beloved. What sublime pathos, what awful sadness in the cry of David: "Oh, Absalom, my son! Oh, my son, Absalom." Human sorrow could express no more. The highest love for Christ finds no utterance so expressive as that of His Name. Hence, the admirable wisdom of the Church which fixes a day for the special veneration of the name of Jesus.

II.—The Power of a Name.

1. A name is something more than word, and a word is a thing of power. What awesome magic lies in a great name, that its mere utterance, like a match to a dry forest, can set on fire the souls of men, and flood their imaginations with radiance. De Quincey

tells us that in his opium dreams the mention of the word "consul" set him in a great terror: for he seemed to hear the tread of thundering legions on the heaving earth, and his soul was overwhelmed by the seeming approach of the splendid power of Rome. The name of Napoleon stirs the commonest soul, and the mind sees in the name, as the eye might in a kaleidoscope, the shifting scenes of camp and court and council, hears in it the thunders of battles, and the shouts of conquering legions, is dazzled by the great height of glory and saddened by the depth of disgrace, to which the genius of man can come. The name of Dante is to the ear like the powerful music of a celestial orchestra, which sounds the joy of heaven, the hope of purgatory, and the despair of hell. The name of Washington is like a trumpet to the ears and hearts of all who long for the freedom of the nations, and the elevation of all peoples to the highest human liberty.

2. If great names have such power over the imagination, loved names have a still greater power over the heart, though they be only the heroines of famous poems like "Evangeline," or the idols of foreign nations like Joan of Arc. What tears have not been shed over the sadly sweet story of the Acadian girl who sought her lover for years, only to find him at his death-hour, and to hear but one utterance from his dying lips. She is the symbol of human effort, human hope, and human suffering: and the world loves her, because its suffering, though sung by no poet, is as keen and as hopeless as hers. The world loves Joan of Arc in spite of her traducers, in spite of the fears of the unbelieving, that her popularity may

mean much for Christianity in the people's hearts; because her career is typical of the career of unselfish leaders: youth, genius, power, great-heartedness, immolated, burned at the stake, that greed and iniquity may thrive.

3. Yet both the great and the loved names of history and literature do not appeal to all, because not known to all; and their power is small compared with the power exercised upon us by the home names dear almost without exception to every human heart: the names of father and mother, sister, brother, friends, children. The finest lines that the poet Holmes penned, the most touching and sweet, are the stanza from "The Last Leaf":

> The mossy marbles rest
> On the lips that he has prest
> In their bloom;
>
> And the names he loved to hear
> Have been carved for many a year
> On the tomb.

There does not beat a human heart, which these simple home names do not affect. Custom may take the edge off affection and remembrance, and the dead may be quickly forgotten, but when dreams overtake us, these old names well up from the depths of selfishness and cross the unconscious lips; when sickness banishes the shams of life, and tears off the mask of self-deception, old, dry lips, withered with the gibberish of trade or scarred by blasphemies of sin, murmur the sweet names of childhood and youth and innocence; and when death is about to free the poor soul from its earthly tenement, the dying "bab-

ble o' green fields" and call for the mother, whose loving hand and voice could chase away pain and fear and death, as the physicians of all time never will. Such is the power of a name, of a merely human name, whose owner turns to ashes and sinks into oblivion.

III.—The Power of the Holy Name.

1. What, then, must not be the power of the sweetest human name in history, which linked with it the Divine—the Name of Jesus. The Scriptures exhaust language in describing It. St. Paul says: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross; for which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."—Phil. ii. As a strong wind sweeping over the world bends forest and flower, upturns the deep, kisses and cools the cheeks of men, and makes wonderful harmonies and terrifiying discords along remote shores and in the depths of mountains, so the utterance of this great Name stirs the depths of human interest and emotion, rises to heaven and draws sweet acclaim from the angels, sinks to hell amid the tears of the lost, and touches the deeps of the infinite nature of God. What a wonderful and sublime thought! that the voice of a child, breathing this name upon the air, transcends the mightiest forces of nature in actual power!

2. Is it any wonder that His followers have always

taken such pride in this glorious name that they do nothing, ask nothing, accomplish nothing, except through Its invocation? All the splendid prayers of the Church close with some reference to the Name of Jesus; the Apostles worked all their miracles of nature and grace through this beloved Name; the martyrs endured their bitter sufferings in Its strength. Its utterance was not only their consolation but their pride. With what pride Americans utter the name of Washington, Frenchmen the name of Napoleon, Italians the name of Dante, Englishmen the name of Milton; yet how insignificant their emotion compared with that holy pride which stirs the Catholic heart in uttering the Name of the Master. How astonished were the pagans of old when their idols fell in pieces before Its utterance from the lips of a martyr, when even the great empire crumbled under It. Yet why should not mankind feel the deepest pride in It, when the Eternal God speaks that Name with all paternal pride? "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

3. With what love It has been uttered since that moment when the Angel announced to St. Joseph the name of the Saviour! What mother ever spoke the name of a beloved child with the love that illumined the heart and lips of Mary, who has been uttering the Name of her Son with ever-increasing love for twenty centuries? The angels of heaven have chorused her sweet invocations, and the saints and sinners of earth have swelled the wonderful strain of human and angelic love. The millions of Christians that have died in holiness or repentance spent their latest breath on the Name of Jesus, their countersign

for the great camp of heaven, their farewell to the world. Even the pagan world has loved It, for the sake of the most perfect Man that time has given us. All the prophecies have been fulfilled concerning It. "And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."—Isa. ix. What reproach shall then be uttered against the Church of God that it celebrates by every means in its power the glory of Christ's Name: that it sets the world in motion two or three times in a year in order that men may praise with serious and penitent hearts the Holy Name of their Leader and Saviour? Is it not a sign of degeneration and of cooling faith among the sects that they have no feasts of this kind, and that they scorn them? If the fair-minded went searching for that body of Christians which showed most love for the Son of God, is it not likely that they would stop with those who exhaust human resources in praising their Master, rather than with those who have no public honors for the events of His career? Let us all, then, adore and love with ever-increasing veneration and respect the Holy Name of Jesus. "For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."—Acts iv.

The Married State.

A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.—Gen. ii. 24.
This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church. —Ephes. v. 32.

OUTLINE.

1. The main object of marriage is the propagation of the human race.
2. The high motives and serious preparation necessary for marriage.
3. The blessings conferred upon those who receive it.
4. Parents should bring forth their children in purity and sobriety.
5. In the children their own youth is renewed.
6. And all their energies are deepened.
7. The necessity of absolute devotion to the duties of marriage.
8. The heavy responsibility resting upon the married.
9. And the rewards with which heaven and earth acknowledge their fidelity.

I.—Honorable Condition of the Married.

1. The world to-day is as busy as it was in ancient times trying to forget the obligations of the married. If it could have its way, the marriage state would have no other obligations than the pleasure and comfort of those who enter upon it. Perhaps at no time in history has the true aim of marriage been so persistently ridiculed as in our day; when whole nations have taken it upon themselves to control and limit the natural increase of the race without regard to the laws of nature and the laws of God. The main object of marriage is the propagation of the human race. It is a high and honorable office which the young man and woman accept, uniting their human destinies. They are not only to be a comfort and support

to each other, but they are to provide the nation with the workers, the rulers, the thinkers, who are to fill all the places now occupied by the workers, the rulers, and the thinkers of this moment. They are to give the great Christian Church its holy people of the next generation, its devoted religious, cultured priests, and holy bishops. And they are to provide heaven with its army of saints, baptized in the blood of the Son of God, and ministering to His glory for all time. What nobler task could man take up for his own honor and the honor of his country?

2. Its dignity requires, therefore, that men should enter upon the married state only after serious thought, careful preparation, and with the highest motives. As it is the condition intended by God for the grand majority of mankind, He has given men and women a strong natural love for it; not simply for its physical pleasures, but for its moral strength, its healthful companionship, and its natural fruits, the beautiful children. We have only to look out upon the pagan world to see the shameful results of marriage reduced to the level of practical concubinage, even where the law has set a sort of temporary sanction on it, temporary because the divorce court can soon do away with the sanction of the law. With the pagan world marriage is a matter to be deferred to the last moment, its sensuality and personal comfort are the only bonds which are to keep the married in one flesh, and the children are thought of only as pets for the amusement of the parents, limited in number and trained accordingly. This view of marriage has obtained a hold on too many Catholics; and, as a consequence, we see the number of the unmarried

among us daily increasing, and the vicious habits of the pagans as well.

3. The dignity and importance of the married state are such as to deserve from God particular and numerous blessings on the parents and their offspring. In the natural order this union of the man and woman gives mental and moral balance to the married pair. Their mutual love widens and deepens their sympathies, and their range of thought; their new responsibilities cause them to take more serious views of life and its burdens; the young man becomes more truly a man and a citizen, and the young woman more devoted; and both take a deeper interest in their own nature and destiny. In the spiritual order they get a better understanding of religion, of its deep meanings, and of the bearing it has upon the happiness of man. This is true only of the decently married, of those to whom the bond of marriage is perpetual, and in whose horizon there is no divorce court. Hence, the Holy Spirit has said: "House and riches are given by parents: but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord."—Prov. xix. And again: "He that hath found a good wife, hath found a good thing, and shall receive a pleasure from the Lord." Prov. xviii.

II.—The Fruit of Marriage.

1. The natural fruit of marriage is the children. What a miserable tree is that which bears no fruit, or only a short and sickly crop! Nature gets rid of these trees at its earliest moment, for it abhors the ungenerous and unfruitful; and the wretched crowd whose days are made shameful in their efforts to es-

cape children have other punishments in store than those of the judgment. Nature will avenge herself, if the tree does not bear an abundant and vigorous fruit. Therefore, the next duty of the married, after their duties to each other, is the bringing forth of healthy children. We have all learned in these days of scientific investigation of the immense influence exercised in various ways by the parents upon the children; how they communicate to them not only their physical peculiarities, perfections, and weaknesses, but also in some degree their mental qualities and mental deficiencies, their tendencies both good and bad. How far they do this we cannot tell as yet; but enough is known to warn the parents that they should conceive, and bear, and bring forth their children in sobriety, in purity, in chastity, in continence, and in prayer. Alas, what a multitude of unfortunate children are conceived and born in the swamps of drunkenness, lechery, anger, and hatred. "The children will complain of an ungodly father, because for his sake they are in reproach."—Ecclus. xli.

2. The effect of children upon parents is of wonderful beauty and power. They renew their own lives in the little ones. We are all forever wishing for the chance to live our lives over again. The married with lovable children have no trouble in getting their wish without the effort of another birth and another career. They see their own infancy, childhood, youth, and maturity repeated enjoyably in their children. Their understanding of many things in their past life becomes deeper. They see for the first time the love and care once lavished upon them by

their own parents, the depths of sorrow and joy touched by these faithful guardians in training them to be fathers and mothers in their turn; and their hearts are roused at last to a real love for their own parents. Happy for them if no hardness and ingratitude rise to reproach them for the past. A certain exaltation fills the soul of the parent in seeing his own flesh and blood in another personality than his own; a feeling akin to that of the author who sees the creations of his own brain living in the printed book, or treading the stage. "Nine things that are not to be imagined of the heart have I magnified, and the tenth I will utter to men with my tongue: a man that hath joy in his children, and he that liveth and seeth the fall of his enemies."—Ecclus. xxv.

3. And what strength the possession of children puts into a parent's right arm, what immense energy into his soul. He has the moral and physical endurance of five men, and she of five women, for the little ones must be fed for earth and heaven. A deeper insight is given the father and mother into the things that are and the things of the future, because they must see the road which the little ones are to travel. A deeper reliance on God and His providence fills their hearts, because they feel for the first time their own helplessness fully to guard their children. Thus, their stature increases with their responsibilities and their love, and they become real pillars of the world, which must ever lean upon such as these. Compare with them the breeders of pet animals, which yet may prove to society fierce wolves; the parents who train two or three children for their own amusement, and for the greater misery

of the world. "A son ill-taught is the confusion of his father; and a foolish daughter shall be to his loss."—Ecclus. xxii. 3.

III.—Responsibilities.

1. A state to which is attached so much dignity and so much happiness cannot but have its responsibilities. All can see the devotion necessary from the man to the woman, from the wife to the husband, from the parents to the children. The husband must take the lead in self-sacrifice, as the head of the household; but too often he is a very bad second. How often he forgets that his wife is not the household slave, and allows her to struggle alone with the task of training the children, when the aid of a good servant would make the serious difference between the work of the drudge and the work of the mother. "Keep then your spirit, and despise not the wife of thy youth," says the prophet, Mal. ii. 15. The wife is the rivet of the household, the strong rivet which holds its parts together. Without her the home is impossible, for men are helpless creatures, simple and rough of nature, and incapable of training children. Man was made the head of the household, because his courage and strength make him the natural provider and protector for the family in the rough battle with nature and the world's evil. The wife's devotion must be of that character which will warm his simple and savage heart into its highest expression of love. "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord."—Ephes. v. 22. The united love, labor, and watchfulness of both are re-

quired to train the children, and to prepare them for their journey in life. The souls as well as the bodies of the children are in their power. They can shape them as they choose. They are the garrison of the fort which holds the children of the king, and never a fort had such a host of besiegers; for the armies of them that live by the souls of men lay siege to it night and day in the hope of securing the slaves for the brothel, the gambling-hell, the dark dens of infamy in the world.

2. What lofty devotion is necessary on the part of the parent to train the children on the one hand, and on the other to guard them from their prowling enemies! What a heavy responsibility to society, which must have its workers, and must lessen its criminals, to the Church which must have its saints, and to Christ who must have His kingdom. Yet upon the father and mother falls this grave burden. Is it any wonder that Christ raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, and that the Church denies to any human society, whose members profess the faith, any power over the bond of marriage. The state never yet claimed sole jurisdiction over marriage unless to degrade, and then to destroy the bond, and never showed itself able to lift marriage above its pagan conditions. How miserable to-day is the state of marriage in the United States, where divorce is getting to be nearly as common as marriage! What rottenness must be eating at the vitals of the nation when the leaders permit the race-nest to be so shamefully befouled, the parents to be encouraged in sensual pleasures, and the children exposed to the training of the street.

3. The rewards of those who in the married state faithfully fulfil their obligations are deservedly very great. Happy in each other's love for long years, the husband and wife remain lovers to the end, getting out of life all the joy that properly belongs to it. Their age is made honorable by children of worth, whose affection and integrity and faith are the true riches of the parent. Society is their grateful debtor for members of high character, and church and state offer them deep gratitude for the blessing of worthy citizens and believers. Finally, they have Jesus Christ Himself for their debtor, inasmuch as they have given to Him recruits for His kingdom. They enjoy no public honor, and statues are not erected to them; but many a hero, poet, genius, whose name is sweet in the world's ears, has been of less use to his fellows than the faithful parents of wise children. What comfort and courage should not these reflections bring to the tired hearts of struggling parents. Their reward is in heaven indeed, but the pure joys which come to them here amid the "burden of the day and the heats" are worth the labor and the pain.

The Child.

Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.—Mark x. 14.

OUTLINE.

1. The tender relationship between parents and children.
2. The care of the children's physical growth.
3. The cultivation of good habits and manners.
4. Their mental training must begin at home.
5. And be continued in carefully selected schools.
6. Their innocence and virtue are often sold for an education.
7. The soul's training more necessary than any other.
8. The parents have all the responsibility in this matter.
9. And too many carry it with unnatural ease.

I.—The Child's Body.

1. There is no relationship so tender and so intimate as that which exists between the parent and the child. It has a marked resemblance to that between the Creator and His creature, because the parent brings forth the child, which is utterly dependent upon him for sustenance and development. Therefore, upon the parent rests the obligation of securing to the child all the elements of a sound training for his career here and hereafter. It is a heavy responsibility. It means great labor, great devotion, and great self-denial for the father and the mother. At the same time it means great reward. The clay in the hands of the sculptor is not so utterly at his disposal as the child in the hands of its parents. For twenty years they may do as they will with him; on one con-

dition, that they do it in the purest love. He is a free being, and can be bound by ties more enduring than death, if these bonds be forged in love; and this love must be expressed, not only in actual care, and in unseen tendernesses, but in loving expressions, looks, services, and embraces, up to the moment of the child's departure into the world. It is the wonderful feature of parental power, that for twenty years it has the child completely at the mercy of love.

2. The parent's love should have foresight, and be guided by knowledge. The little body, now such a delight to father and mother by its tender beauty, must carry its owner a long way into the world. The parent should see that it grows vigorously, with grace of shape and movement. How important this is can be seen from a glance at any collection of young people. What negligence, ignorance, and difference on the part of the parents have produced so many deformities! Deformities not serious, of course, but ungraceful, and always painful to their possessors: the rounded shoulders, crooked legs and ankles, poor shapes, gawkish motions and gestures, unhealthy skins, muddy complexions, weak eyesight, wretched digestions, rough voices, deficient hearing, and many other regrettable things. It is the duty of the parents to guard against these misfortunes. They must watch the little bodies daily from the cradle, observe their movements and growth, hinder the approach of the slightest deformities, cultivate the natural graces, and make heroic efforts to secure to their children a good set of physical qualities, the use of perfect organs. This means labor and thought. It means good food,

long sleep, plenty of air and exercise, and loving training. When we see the care which farmers, and other owners of animals, lavish on horses, cattle, dogs, fowls, pet birds, and the like, it is painful to witness the extraordinary indifference to the proper physical care of children.

3. The children have a right to better training on this point than even the blooded stock. In addition they have a right to sound training in human habits and gentle manners. There is no reason why the poorest child should not have as fine habits of body, and as gentle manners, as any child of the rich. If the children of the workers are without these things, it is because their parents were without them, attached no value to them, and could not give either example or instruction to the little ones. Poverty is beautiful in itself, and Christ has made it more beautiful still: but the careless poor make it hideous by the lack of order, cleanliness, and beautiful simplicity in their homes, lives, and manners. How much better for human happiness, if parents thought less of personal comfort, money-making, getting on in the world, and more of decency, good habits, and fine manners. "Is not the life more than the meat; and the body more than the raiment?"—Matt. vi.

II.—The Child's Mind.

1. More than clothes, food, position, is the personal character of the man. The aim of the parent should be to give the child a strong character. While securing to Him a healthy and graceful body, the mind should not be neglected, and its first training should

come from father and mother. The mother will ever have the larger share in developing the mind of the child, but the father has no right to neglect his part in the beautiful work. And the first step in awakening that mind is to give the little one a reflective certainty of the parental love, tenderness, mercy, and justice. It already has the instinctive certainty, and turns to father and mother promptly for protection, consolation, caress, and aid. It babbles all its confidences in their ears, and finds no embrace so attractive and sustaining as in their arms. Why should this happy and natural union ever decay? Why is it that, in after years, so many children find any ear more suitable for the thoughts of their hearts than the parental, any embrace more thrilling than father's or mother's? Parents and children drift apart with the years, mostly because the parent has lost deepest interest in the child. See that you do better. Never let go of your child's heart. Never let any human being come between you, until the moment arrives when in the course of nature he must leave father and mother for higher duties.

2. The best training of the mind is not that which is received in school, but at home. This fact is fairly forgotten by the parents of our day. So fine are the advantages of education in this country, so numerous the schools and colleges and universities, so easy the terms, that few regard any more the education of the home. The grand majority of our educational institutions are merely purveyors of information: they rarely educate. And it is a frequent fact with them, that while they turn out people well informed on law, medicine, and similar topics, they rarely turn out a

lady or a gentleman, a fine character, a deeply religious soul, a robust honesty, unless such things came to them from the homes of the land: nay, it is an absolute certainty, that they have often honored the human pig with degrees, and converted lady and gentleman, honesty and piety into their opposites. They tell parents frankly that their purpose is to convey information, not to educate human beings. Therefore let the child's mental training be seriously carried on at home, while the schools are cramming him with information. Have the shelf of good books, and the clean paper and magazine at hand, and let father talk of the history of the time and the great deeds and movements of the past. It is the home which makes the true scholar.

3. We are so weighted down with varieties of information by the schools, that the ambition of parent and child is to swallow tons of information and not to develop a fine character. No serious attention is paid to the character and fitness of teachers, books, subjects, associates. The child is not taught directly the value of religion, honesty, truthfulness, sobriety, purity, manliness, but is supposed to have these virtues as his father's child. The boy and girl are flung into the public school, then into the academy; after, they may be sent, the youth to the distant college, the girl to the distant finishing seminary. That is all the parents know about it. More than one father and mother have paid for the information furnished to their children, not only by large sums of money, but with their children's very souls. "And what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" That price is

too high for all the information that ever was or ever will be given by universities to men.

III.—The Child's Soul.

1. The vanity of parents, often, too, their carelessness and laziness, will lead them into all sorts of mistakes and blunders and deficiencies in training the bodies and minds of their children, if they do not always keep in view their terribly imperative duty to the souls of the little ones. Here is Our Lord's own statement on this matter: "And he that shall receive one such little child, in my name, receiveth me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."—Matt. xviii. How many a wretched parent found no meaning in these words until his lost children and his wrathful Judge repeated them for him in judgment. The soul of the child is the chief interest of the parent. It remains when the body, the mind, information, and education alike, have crumbled into dust. It is of his work for this soul that the parent will have to give the longest account at the last moment before eternity.

2. The soul of the child is the very hinge of the parent's duty. His responsibility is heavy, and for this reason Christ left abundant and special helps for parents in the administration of the Church. The Sacraments seem almost to have been established for the parent alone; for the way of the child on the earth is made beautiful by the four sacraments which he

receives in his infancy and youth, and through their gracious influence the parent's work is lightened and made delightful. Nature also is most kind to the father and mother. The child has a natural love of beauty and order, imitates closely his parents, takes up their likes and dislikes, and enjoys a heavenly innocence which ordinary love and care can preserve undefiled for many years. Now, if the father and mother make home the child's temple, dress it in holy pictures, keep its atmosphere clear of dispute, profanity, vulgarity, and redolent of sweet words and prayers; if they study each playmate, each teacher, each book, and each school, with regard to the child's soul; if the desire to see him honest, truthful, pious, frank, brave, refined, and gentle-mannered surpasses their desire to see him laden with the information of the schools; if their love for him passes the bounds of earth, and looks to the enjoyment of him in eternity—then nature and grace will join with them in shaping a being who will be the joy of earth and of heaven.

3. Alas! how far from this ideal is the average child of the time. You have only to listen and observe in their company to describe the home in which they lived: its members were loving enough in their secret hearts, perhaps, but temper and rough language were more frequent than expressions of love; the family troubles were the commonest topics of conversation, varied by discourses from the father on the value of riches, the need of them, the great efforts that ought to be made for securing them, the scorn of men for those who had them not, the consideration they win from the world; but rarely was heard a word

on religion, on the value of the Christian life, on the dignity of an honest, truthful, God-fearing soul, on the beauty of life as God's precious gift, on the great events of time and eternity, which constitute the real greatness of man. In such homes there is no true training of body, mind, and soul for the children. Nevertheless, the silly parents wonder in after-years why their ill-formed offspring went so thoroughly and suddenly to the bad! They have good reason to fear that Heli's fate shall be theirs. "And the Lord said to Samuel: Behold, I do a thing in Israel, and whosoever shall hear it, both his ears shall tingle. In that day I will raise up against Heli all the things I have spoken concerning his house: I will begin, and I will make an end. For I have foretold unto him, that I will judge his house forever, for iniquity; because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them."—1 Kings, iii.

Easter Sunday.

He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.—1 Cor. xv. 4.

Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him.—Rom. vi. 9.

OUTLINE.

1. The Church's power over men is seen in the attention aroused by its great festivals.
2. This power was first exercised by the Apostles.
3. And has come down to us as the inheritors of their faith and hope.
4. Men ask at the grave: Is this the last of man?
5. Standing at the door of death they cry out: Is return from darkness possible?
6. Parting from life's consciousness they ask: Shall we be ourselves again?
7. And Christ gave answer to all by His Resurrection.
8. Faith in His return from the dead has renewed mankind.
9. We should exult on this day in the splendid destiny that awaits us.

I.—The Church and the Resurrection.

1. From the human standpoint it is marvelous what power the Church has over the minds of men, that in what are called the days of her decay she can arouse so much public interest in her great festivals. At Christmas she announces to the world that the Son of the living God became a man, and at once the critics respond, How can God become man? Neither the Church nor the people under her shadow give heed to the critics, but proceed to celebrate the birthday of Christ. On Good Friday the Church announces the death of Jesus Christ, and at once the critics respond: How can God die? Nevertheless the world weeps, puts on sackcloth and ashes, and makes some attempts

to do penance for its sins. On this day the Church proclaims the return of the God-Man from the dead, and the critics respond again: The dead return never. While they are proving their assertion the Christian world and its fringe of unbelievers proceed to celebrate the greatest feast of the time, the secret hope of the human race from the beginning having been a resurrection from the dead. The joy of Christians is so deep and powerful that its heat warms the earth, and the infidel neighbor is warmed into enthusiasm and must join in our joy. The earth at this moment is propitious. The season of resurrection is come again, and the least believing can hope that, if the grass and the flowers can return after the winter's death, man shall have his permanent resurrection. The critics are helpless until popular enthusiasm has died away. It was St. Paul who said, "Your faith is spoken of in the whole world."—Rom. i.

2. The Church achieved this wondrous power, not by trickery, or scheming, as so many pretend, but through the faith and hope of men. Not human trickery, nor angelic scheming, nor satanic cunning is capable of results so large as those secured by the teaching of the Apostles. These humble men of Galilee had seen their Master's first and latest miracles, had lived with Him, and suffered with Him, and had seen His dead body laid away in the grave after a savage death; they had heard His prophecies of His resurrection from the tomb on the third day after His death, they had seen the empty sepulchre on the first Easter morning, and at intervals had conversed and eaten with their risen Lord forty days. By faith and by nature they had seen and heard all these wonder-

ful things; and that hope which burned in their natural breasts as men, that death was only the door to life, became at once an integral part of their souls, so terrifically rooted that no power outside of God Himself could tear it thence without annihilating them. The pagans of that day, in whose confused minds burned that same fire of hope, heard their story, their gospel, saw them go to death for it with perfect joy, and surrendered to the Christ. "God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost according to His own will."—Heb. ii.

3. As they were witnesses to the fact and truth of the Resurrection to the pagans of that day, so are we the witnesses in our own time. The poor infidel looks upon us as marvels; men who believe that death is but a beginning, that many have returned from the grave, that men is immortal, that sin exists, and death is its wages. They study us to see what effect our beliefs have on our lives, to see if we really believe. The Apostles and the early Christians in great numbers gave them ready proof by their sufferings and death. What proofs have we to give? Our scorn of life for its own sake, of sinful pleasure, of riches, of sin, and our devotion to Christ and His commandments, to His people, and to all men. The power of the Church in each age is secured only through the faith of the people, sanctified and strengthened by the Spirit, and, as it were, reflecting Christ and His life for the unbelievers of the time. "You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria."—Acts i.

II.—The World and the Resurrection.

1. Of all the doctrines to which we bear witness, none has such charm for the unbeliever as this of the Resurrection. Men stand looking into the open grave, which open must remain until the last man has entered it, and grief-stricken cry out: Is this the last of us? With what astonishment and joy they see rising out of the tomb, triumphant over the inevitable law, the boy of Naim, restored to his widowed mother, the daughter of Jairus, amid the minstrels laughing with scorn, the long-dead Lazarus, honored by the tears of Jesus, and at last the Christ Himself, first-born of the tomb, who will never, unlike the others, taste death again. His answer to despairing man is comforting. The grave is only the gate to life eternal. As Longfellow sang:

> "There is no death, what seems so is transition."

But the Christ has more definite words: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world."—John vi. "And this is the will of My Father that sent Me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day."—John vi.

2. In the hours of grief men beat against the walls of death crying out in their despair: Is there anything beyond the grave which holds hope for us? Catholics are unable to measure the depths of this sorrow, because they have never been without hope at any moment. Unbelievers alone have looked into that abyss

of hopelessness, and felt its full horror. For centuries in the lonely places of the world, places where tradition did not exist and Christ was unknown, the grief-stricken cursed the gods they knew, cursed death, cursed life and thought, because the end of all was misery, uncertainty, or nothingness. How gloriously the voices of the Apostles broke in upon this great despair. With what joy the eyes of sorrow gazed upon the risen Christ, and how all ears drank in His comforting message, and the strong words of His messengers. "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace." They announced a life beyond the grave. "To him that shall overcome I will have to sit with Me in my throne: as I also have overcome, and can sit down with My Father in his throne." "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see my glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the foundation of the world."—John xvii.

3. Men wondered if in the life to come, as taught by the old traditions, their own personality would remain intact. The pagans saw in the life beyond the grave only mournful shades or hideous monsters. Man had no longer any existence except in the sad memory of the shades, so that annihilation was preferable to that dreary existence. The hope of meeting their beloved again did not hold out any special charm. Therefore, they questioned the oracles and the wise repeatedly, but without satisfaction. The body returned to its native dust, and there was no whisper of a resurrection; until the Gospel came with its story of the visible Christ and His glorified body,

who conversed in human tones with His disciples, and ate fish and honey, to make them understand the reality of His Resurrection. The traditions of men were vague, the statements of the gospel were precise. "It (the body) is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body."—1 Cor. xv.

III.—Man and the Resurrection.

1. The message of the gospel was not a message of philosophy, or of speculation. It came direct from God to man, with the obligation to believe, and the bloody seal of martyrdom on its cover. The first missionaries died for its truth. Is it any wonder that men went mad with joy over the divine consolations of the message, which annihilated death, and opened up to man the glory of the celestial world? They flung themselves on paganism, and pagan civilization went down before them like a house of cards; they fled into the deserts, into the solitudes of convents, that they might enjoy their new treasures undisturbed. They divided their riches, where they had them, among the poor, they made themselves beggars in their scorn of this world, they turned their backs on honors, they put themselves at the service of the wretched, they found a hundred thousand strange channels by which to display the joy which moved them. For some centuries the wise world has been laughing at their extravagances, forgetting their victories; for, whether crazy or not after the world's

standard, they achieved what their critics have not strength of mind even to dream of—the shifting of humanity's broad and violent stream from one channel into another, from the channel of the false gods to the channel of Christ. They followed St. Paul to the letter. "I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ."—Phil. iii.

2. The same faith and hope which stirred them to tremendous achievement work in the Church and in us at this moment. Woe to us if they did not! And the same spectacle is witnessed in our ranks, of thousands withdrawing into solitude with Christ, of millions trampling upon the flesh and its concupiscences, on the world and its bribes, in order to follow Christ and keep his commandments. If our faith and hope are alive, we cannot but hold in some scorn the penny prizes of life, for which so many fight, starve, and sin. If the final resurrection is something more than a name to us, it must fill our lives with such glory that the honors of time look cheap in its light. If we are really in dead earnest to achieve eternity, we can hardly have time to build up fortunes, to shine in society, to buy a great name, to get a heavy bank account, to enjoy all the pleasures of this life. You cannot persuade even the pagan of your earnest belief in the life to come, if he cannot see some difference between you and the mob of respectable earth-worshippers.

3. The expression of faith should be the same in every age as to its strength, and vary only in the

method. In their zeal the early Christians went to martyrdom, a later generation fled into the desert, a third built convents and cathedrals and charities, a fourth set out on the crusades: all inspired by the glory of the resurrection of the body, the glory of the life to come. What expression shall our age give to the faith and hope in its bosom? Devotion to the Church, to the faith so bitterly attacked at this time. We are soldiers living in camp under military rule and hardship; for almost four centuries we have been forced to do battle for the faith of Christ; this is the eleventh generation in the field. The twelfth will probably witness our triumph. What are the duties of good soldiers? Fidelity, courage, patience, sobriety, absolute devotion to the leader! "Hear, O Israel, you join battle this day against your enemies: let not your heart be dismayed, be not afraid, do not give back, fear ye them not."—Deut. xx.

The Ascension of the King.

And when He had said these things, whilst they looked on, he was raised up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.—Acts i. 9.

OUTLINE.

1. On this day Christ left the earth, having vindicated to Himself the kingship of men and angels.
2. On this day He made His glory as manifest as had been the shame of Calvary.
3. The timid and now exalted disciples wept that He should part from them.
4. They were now to begin their work of preparing the world for His second coming.
5. The world, in despair over death's mystery, joyfully accepted their promise of life eternal.
6. The prospect of a glorious resurrection renewed the life of man.
7. Yet many to-day find it hard to believe in everlasting life and continual happiness.
8. The simple and beautiful conditions for obtaining that happiness.
9. In this matter Christ and His vicar are compared with the teachers of materialism.

I.—Mount Olivet.

1. It is a difficulty with natures brought up in religious routine to picture to themselves the wonderful scenes of Our Lord's life. So often have they heard from the pulpit formal descriptions of these scenes, so regular has been the reading of the gospel at the Sunday Mass, that events, incidents, personages, groupings of the most dramatic character, pass before their minds without arousing even curiosity. They are taken as a matter of course. Cæsar crossing the Rubicon, entering Rome in triumph, dying at the base of Pompey's statue, thrills them as often as read or told; Washington bidding farewell to his army, re-

fusing a crown, living in seclusion at Mount Vernon, brings tears to their eyes; Christ in His Passion and Ascension is so mysterious and awful that they refuse to be astonished or moved. Yet to-day it is their King who leaves the earth in triumph. His special work is done. He has vindicated to Himself the kingship of earth and heaven. Through all ages He will be accepted, even by the men who deny His divinity, as the Prince of the human race, the noblest, loftiest genius, the holiest, purest, humblest soul, that ever honored earth by his life and death. It will be admitted that no human life ever influenced men like His. The greatest poets, sages, statesmen, leaders will look small and trivial beside Him. His genius or His Divinity, for pagan or Christian, has leavened the whole earth. Surely this one fact, His acknowledged superiority, ought to reach and stir the slowest nature.

2. Mount Olivet is the antithesis of Calvary. Cæsar went from the Lupercal to the Capitol, Napoleon from the throne to St. Helena, Moses from the highest position among his people to an obscure grave in the land of Moab. The Saviour passes from the shame and horror of Calvary to the glory of Mount Olivet. The scenes of the preceding six weeks are the emphasis of this day; the sorrowful road to the cross, the death-agony, the burial, and the days of mourning; the appearances in the garden, to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, to the group in the lonely chamber, to St. Thomas, to the timid and frightened few on the seashore, who "durst not ask Him anything," to the Mother who never spoke to man of what she had seen. The appearances were made at various times and

places. But on Mount Olivet, in the beautiful spring morning, He stands before them all, as plainly manifested in His glory as He had been in His shame. They can doubt no more; what each has seen more than five hundred can confirm. Calvary becomes glorious in the light of this glorified body about to ascend to heaven; the cross becomes a throne; and suffering is no longer a reproach, but an honor.

3. One can hardly help a deep interest in the feelings of the disciples as they stood and knelt about the risen King. They knew not what to expect and were still prepared for new wonders. "They asked Him, saying: Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" And He had to rebuke them gently, as He had so often done for their curiosity about things unconnected with the kingdom of heaven. Their one sorrow was that His departure was near. He comforted them in vain. How they must have begged for His visible residence with them. What tears and sobs arose from their ranks, as the Divine form began to rise from the forlorn world. Neither the love of His disciples nor the love of His mother could keep Him one moment from the doing of His Father's will. The old legends tell us that the earth kept the impress of His holy feet for long centuries; and surely, if the inanimate rock betrays the existence of living creatures whose characteristics are unknown to man, it might well keep on its bosom the last footprints of the Divine Humanity. The disciples watched Him going into heaven, and stood looking long after the cloud had hidden Him, and had spent itself in the blue. They kissed the ground made holy by His presence, prayed for resignation, and looked again

and yet again toward heaven. No doubt they would have remained there indefinitely, but for the orders sent by the Master.

II.—The World Rejoices.

1. "And while they were yet looking upon Him going into heaven, behold two men stood beside them in white garments, who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up to Heaven. This Jesus, who has been taken up from you, will come again, as you have seen Him going into heaven." So the grief-stricken crowd returned to Jerusalem, and thence sought the busy world with the tidings of all that they had heard and seen. For what the angels meant, and what the disciples understood, was without doubt that no delay should hinder the speedy announcement of that second coming of Christ to all men. The disciples were to be the messengers of preparation and penance, the preachers of the new life. With what speed they hurried into the world, with what deadly earnestness they told to men the story of the Saviour. "The sound of them went forth over the whole earth, and their words into the very boundaries thereof." The first coming of Christ brought truth, the convictions of sin, the knowledge of the immortal life; the second coming would bring judgment, the end of probation, the final and irrevocable award for eternity. From their labor arose the great church of Christ with its sacraments, its undying organization, its incredible reaching out after the souls of men. In ten centuries the Apostles had carried the world with them.

2. Humanly speaking, what was the secret of that

great success? How did the careless and pagan world bring itself to listen to the fishermen of Galilee? The dark mystery of death had been the cross of the pagan world, which saw no hope beyond the tomb, saw only the corruption and the horrid oblivion of the grave. The wisest of that world beat their hearts against the terrific wall of death in the vain attempt to understand the mystery. On one of the old tombs a mother had inscribed a curse against the gods, who had given her a beloved son only to rob her of him by eternal death, an incident which truly represents the temper of the ancient world in this regard. Men dabbled in magic in hope of getting some information from the spirit-land; but the gloom of mystery ever remained, their inferno was the home of despair, their elysium was the home of eternal sadness. When the Apostles appeared upon the scene with their story of the risen Christ, of Him who had conquered death and the grave, and who promised eternal life to his followers, such a light broke in upon the gloom of the pagan world as has never since been quenched. The mystery was solved by faith in Jesus the King. The road through this world, across the abyss of death, passing the judgment throne, closing in heaven with a mere by-path into purgatory, lay as clear before the Christian eye as the Appian Way. No wonder the world seized on this splendid hope; the only wonder is that it should have waited a thousand years to make the hope universal.

3. This hope is the joy of the Christian world to-day, and marks the difference between ancient and modern times, between the moral and immoral of our day. The facts of the resurrection and the ascension

are the basis of our joy in this life as well as in the life to come. That we shall rise again makes death only a sleep, whose sweetness is enhanced by the joys of heaven; it turns the hearts of the hardest of men toward the real life, and away from the pettinesses of earth; the grave is no more a place of horror, since Christ and His saints have honored it, and the latter have endured in peace its corruption. The angels guard it, the church sanctifies it, the world respects it; and we can enter our graveyards, sad indeed at the end of so much beauty, but cheered with the hope of a life without end. How despairing would be our pleasant lives without this hope of resurrection, of reunion with our beloved, of life perfect to the least detail, we can see from the gloom which has depressed the hearts of the great who could not accept belief in Christ.

III.—The Conditions of the New Life.

1. Why do men find it so difficult to believe in the life to come and its eternal happiness? The materialist thinks it too good to be true, and the faithless Christian knows its happiness is lost to him. Therefore the latter pursues an endless round of pleasure or of money-getting, and the other is forever building theories to account for himself, mere houses of cards, that tumble as he builds, and then leave him to nameless gloom at the last. He can believe in the eternity of matter, in the indestructibility of the universe, but he cannot suffer man to enjoy so glorious, and yet so ordinary a prize, since dead matter will share it with him,—man with his wonderful nature, unlike any other thing in nature, and yet like enough to secure

for his individual personality that eternal existence not denied to the substance of the universe. Thus brilliant and clean men, who would have given up mere life here at any moment to enter on the life eternal, could they have believed in it, have gone to death in sorrow keener than the agony of dying, because for them the end of all things had come. On the other hand the unrepentant and still-believing sinners have gone to death mad with fear that they could not wholly die, and escape the judgment.

2. Alas! for these poor souls! It would have been so easy for both to have entered into life, so simple and beautiful are the conditions of securing it. To love one another, to bear one another's burdens, to keep the commandments, to eat the flesh and to drink the blood of the Son of Man: these are the hard conditions from which men turn, when Christ invites them to the struggle for an everlasting crown. His own life is the pattern of the true Christian life, and what consolation its history offers the anxious minds of men. He lived thirty-three years in the sweet obscurity and holy peace of His mother's house, without other than the ordinary troubles of life; His great suffering began and ended within twenty-four hours with the blessing of death; and at once He passed into the enjoyment of eternal glory. Is not this the history of the average man, who has led a life of manly decency and religious fervor? A peaceful conscience, a healthy body, a useful and lovable career, a brief agony, and then the glory of heaven for all eternity; while the wretched violators of the laws run their uneasy career to a bitter death, a strict judgment, a sad extinction in eternal pain.

3. Thus Christ is to-day, as at the beginning, the leader of the cheerful multitude, who will not accept the horizon as the limit of man's career; He is the King of the heavenly life, and by the glory that life sheds on the earthly probation He is the King of the human race. The glory of the first ascension morning shines as brightly on us as on the disciples; and as He stood that day on Mount Olivet, preacher of the joy of life, precursor of the resurrected race, destroyer of death and sin, representative of all that is hopeful in the world, so to-day His Vicar stands before men, preaching the glorious destiny of the race, and holding to the world's view the promises of Christ. When we contrast with His noble utterances, His cheerful teachings, His great services to mankind, the utterances, deeds, and teachings of the materialist school, the wonder grows that any could tolerate the mere presence of such teachers as Ingersoll. He tells men that they shall all one day turn into corruption under the flowers of spring; that life is a tragedy which must be carried out with the graceful lightness of a respectable farce; that men must love one another with the utmost tenderness because death puts an end to them and their tenderest love; that they must cultivate mind and body to perfection, because in a little time mind, body, and perfection will be crushed like a worm under foot; that they must be morally clean, because their tombs should speak to the next generation; and the crowds who listen to this pitiful rant cheer his absurdities to the echo. It was Christ or despair at the first ascension day; the issue has not changed after two thousand years.

The Feast of Pentecost.

But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.—John xvi. 26.

OUTLINE.

1. On this day of Pentecost, the first Pope ascended his everlasting throne, and the great Church of Christ began its career.
2. Our indifference and ignorance in regard to that glorious beginning and still more glorious career.
3. The vitality and power of the Christian principle in this day show no diminution after twenty centuries of use.
4. The Power that wrought this wonder is the Holy Ghost, Whom in our daily lives we so often ignore.
5. Men admire, love, and seek for earthly power, as can be seen in numerous instances.
6. Yet earthly power is nothing when compared to the power of the Holy Spirit working in the weakest man.
7. For illustration, study the effect of Baptism on the infant, Confirmation on the youth, Holy Orders on the young man.
8. Judge, then, what must be the value of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost in Confirmation to the average soul.
9. Hail to that gracious Light which enlightens us! Hail to the great Church! the most wonderful illustration of what the Holy Spirit does for men.

I.—The Spirit in the Church.

1. Christians celebrate to-day the birthday of the Church of Christ. On this day Peter, the fisherman, became the first Pope, and took possession of that seat of power which never will be removed from among the nations until time is no more. Of all the powers that ruled the earth at the first Pentecost, not one survives; the people continue, but the races, the dynasties, the governments die out, are merged in their successors. Only the dynasty and government of Peter still rule in the world, after twenty centuries of effort and dan-

ger. The oldest dynasty and the oldest form of government are nevertheless the youngest and freshest in the world of this moment. The kings of the earth are mostly of yesterday, the governments are of the morning; and both tremble in dread of the morrow. Yet the Papacy, bound and helpless as it appears at this moment, goes on its way without fear, because its foundations are the work of God; and does its work as regularly in the day of persecution as of triumph, because the Spirit informs it, against Whom no man can raise a real barrier. "The Spirit breathes where he listeth." Oldest in years and in achievements, youngest in vitality and activity, the Church stands pre-eminent among the institutions of time.

2. It is regrettable that so many Catholics are not better informed on the glories of the Church as displayed in her history. With all the printed matter poured out on us in these days, there is very little sound information distributed, or even asked for by the multitude of readers. Thus, you will find numbers of well-bred persons to whom the history of Christianity and its Founder are not known except in the mistiest outline. It is only on days like this, that the sermon provides them with information as to the beginnings of the reign of grace. They are amazed to hear of the first Pentecost, of the preaching of Peter and its wonderful results, of the exciting incidents that disturbed Jerusalem from the Ascension to the destruction of the beautiful city; to hear of the days of the persecutions, of the days of triumph that succeeded, of the subduing of the wild nations to the sweet yoke of Christ, and of the creation of a great Christendom. They have heard from our enemies in these

latter days that the Church is a dead institution, and they are half inclined to believe it. Hence, their surprise when the preacher describes for them the founding, the work, the triumphs of such a society of priests as the Jesuits, of such a body of women as the Sisters of Mercy, of such an organization as the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, and then describes the immense charities accomplished by these societies in the very face of the assertion that the old Church is dead.

3. It is a real disgrace not to be acquainted intimately with these things, which are the splendid evidences of the workings of that Holy Spirit, Who works also in each one of us. Two books should be on every shelf, in the home, in the student's room, in the workboy's bedchamber: the New Testament and the history of the Church. "Search the Scriptures," said Our Lord to the Jews, ". . . and the same are they that give testimony of me."—John v. And St. Paul wrote to his beloved disciple, "All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work."—2 Tim. iii. In the New Testament we hear direct the words of Christ, as they fell from His sacred lips, and are touched, as were the people who first heard them, by their deep meaning; in the history of the Church we see the great principles laid down by Our Lord worked out among the societies of the world, leavening all departments of human activity; and particularly do we see repeated in each age by the Holy Spirit the wonders of His first works in the little community at Jerusalem. An intelligent and reading

Catholic should be ashamed to be ignorant of these two books, ashamed to think that his whole information on these matters comes from the occasional sermon.

II.—Man's Love of Power.

1. The Christian, baptized and confirmed, is entitled to the possession of the Holy Ghost. In these two sacraments the Spirit has stamped the soul with an indelible mark, and has guaranteed His assistance to His subject at every moment of life. It is a wonderful thing to know that the meanest human being can command power so immense in his own behalf. The same Being who wrought the wonders of the past, and works to-day in the wonders of charity performed by the Church, in the wonders of sanctity achieved by individuals, is in the hands of a poor beggar, a humble workman, a little child; and these are able, therefore, to wield a power for good in themselves and in others which no earthly monarch wins from his possessions. Man loves power and is forever seeking it. How strange, then, that he pays little attention to the Holy Ghost, even when faith has made him acquainted in some measure with the great power conferred upon men by the Holy Spirit, when they receive Him into their souls with knowledge and joy. We love power, yet ignore the greatest power which man is allowed to use.

2. How deeply the love of power is rooted in us can be seen from common examples. Who does not admire the chief officer of the gallant ship that so often faces the dangers of the ocean? What appre-

ciation is not lavished on the skilful and brave engineer who for many decades safely guides across the continent trains bearing men and merchandise! The man of moneyed enterprises, whose talent and watchfulness keeps going immense industries, whose word represents millions of dollars, whose advice is potent in the chambers of commerce and in the councils of the state, commands the respect and admiration of his fellows very often beyond all others, because all men understand the power of money much better than other forms of power. The divinity that doth hedge a king meets almost with worship from mankind; the poet and the philosopher of eminence command both admiration and love; the true statesman enjoys not only the admiration of the people, he also finds his warmest support in king, financier, poet, and philosopher; and finally the warrior, who has fought successfully his country's battles, whose courage, genius, firmness, coolness have been displayed on the most trying occasions, finds actual worship among his admirers. In ancient times the nations, full of admiration for that power which in the glad spring robed the earth in magic green, and later brought forth the bud, the flower, and the seed, adored the sun, as the sum of all beneficent power.

3. Yet all these forms of moral and physical and intellectual power are as but the clay to the statue, the spark to the sun, the name to the thing, when compared with the power of the Holy Ghost fully expressed in a single devoted Christian. All these forms of power, king, warrior, statesman, poet, philosopher, financier, once fought the Christian confessor in the struggle of truth during the time of the great

Roman empire, and were overthrown by the Spirit that spoke within him. These tremendous forces put forth all their strength to move the will now of a child, then of a workman, again of a woman; persuasion, bribery, torch, sword, wild beast, and a hundred other weapons were used; yet the child, the workman, the feeble woman conquered them all in single combat, through this awful power of the Holy Spirit. "Wisdom hath strengthened the wise more than ten princes of the city."—Eccl. vii.

III.—The Seven Gifts.

1. In Confirmation we receive the power of the Holy Ghost in the seven gifts attached to that wonderful sacrament. Unfortunately only the few remember that they have these gifts in their possession, the many make no use of them except by accident or instinct, and pass to their grave without understanding their treasures. Yet take the instance of power conferred upon an infant by the reception of the Holy Ghost in Baptism, if you wish to see what is lost by this ignorance and indifference. In the baby hands is placed, first the key to the treasury of Christ's graces, and next the key to heaven itself. Around and in that innocent soul works the spirit of Jesus, its atmosphere is luminous of heaven, and should death release it from the prison of the body, the gates of heaven open to its demand. All the wisdom and power of earth in one could not compass these two things, the opening of Christ's treasury, and the opening of heaven to a single soul; yet the hands of a child, strengthened by the power of the

Holy Spirit, accomplish the wonder with infinite ease. Take the example of the young priest just ordained. What was he a moment ago? A youth of the people, inexperienced, innocent, not beyond the average of his kind, worthy only of ordinary notice, incapable of more than ordinary achievement; and now, through the Holy Spirit, he is that wonderful being, a priest, empowered to release men from their sins, to lift them up to standards of virtue, to bring upon the altar the Son of God in His actual flesh and blood, to distribute Him to all men, to lead the people in the way of truth, to announce the gospel everywhere; he is the recipient of many honors, he is given a thousand opportunities to win honors; and men stand in awe and reverence as they see him making the round of his duties, at the bedsides of the sick and wretched, ministering to the lepers in body and soul, courageous, laborious, patient, fighting wrong in courts, forums, and in hovels, and preferred everywhere by the miserable of this world to the kings that sit on thrones.

2. What is so beautifully done for the infant and for the priest is done in the same way through Confirmation for the commonest man. If he remains all his days without sign of power within him, he alone is to blame. When one asks the indifferent at this moment, where are these gifts in you, what use have you made of them, the response is merely an indifferent smile. Alas! how differently will these two questions sound at judgment, when the Christ will ask of the neglectful: Where are the gifts I secured for you; what use have you made of those precious talents, which were meant to distinguish you from your less fortunate fellows, to make you a power in

the world for good, no matter how mean your occupation, and to bring blessings on all who knew you for your own sake as well as for mine? What answer will you make? Perhaps, like the foolish servant in the parable, to say that you feared your master, and buried His talents? Hardly; for that unfortunate knew the talent was in his posession, while you forgot, the day after Confirmation, that Christ had given you his treasures.

3. Hasten this day, therefore, to unbury your forgotten treasures, and to put them out at interest, so as to have a splendid store against the day of reckoning. Do not leave your commonplace lives utterly without the light and heat and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Having Him not, life becomes a mean burden for all but the beasts of humanity; with Him, the dark places are as noonday, and the bright places have the splendor of heaven. What glorious things has not this Comforter accomplished for the human race in all ages, but particularly since Christ sent Him to complete the work of the Redemption! How He has illumined and beautified the pathway of man from the first Pentecost! Hail to that splendid Church, which He has made the mother of the nations! Men come and go each in his little day, and the works of the wisest hands perish with them; but the great Church, inspired by the Spirit, goes on forever, completes the work our feeble hands could not finish, perfects it, guards it, and gives it a kind of immortality among men. "The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among reeds. They shall judge nations, and rule over people, and their Lord shall reign forever."—Wis. iii.

The Blessed Trinity.

Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—Matt. xxviii. 19.

For there are three who give testimony in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one.—1 John v. 7.

OUTLINE.

1. The universe is ruled by one God in three divine Persons.
2. The fact that we have a common Father should strengthen kinship among men.
3. The Father's love for His children and His rights over them.
4. His love best expressed in the sending of His son to us.
5. As God's children the earth is ours, and as brethren of Christ we claim heaven.
6. The Son's love for His earthly inheritance.
7. The love of the Holy Ghost completes in us the work of the Son.
8. The great power of the Spirit, which so many acknowledge not.
9. The honor of intimacy with the Blessed Trinity.

I.—The Father.

1. Careful observers of Catholic life have noticed the frequent invocation of the Blessed Trinity in our public and private devotions. We begin and end our prayers, our daily actions, our special enterprises, in the name of the three Divine Persons; in moments of danger and of trial we are seen crossing ourselves with the sign of redemption while invoking the Holy Three; and so rooted in us is this custom that the very boys of the street, whose religious training may have been slight, will not take the plunge into their favorite stream until the whole world has seen and

heard their call upon the Blessed Trinity. This is our steady acknowledgment of God's sovereignty over the universe, and it is one of the noblest features of the Catholic life. The whole creation moves to the will of these Three in One, and the very stars sing their praises; the Divine Man received His commission as King of the human race from them; He gave the Apostles and their successors the duty, right, and power to teach all men and to baptize them in the Name of the Blessed Trinity; and the Christian Church is ruled, sustained, and continued by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is not strange, then, that the children of the household should attempt to acknowledge in each flying second the constant Providence of God.

2. What a happiness is ours in having revealed to us a truth, which the old world knew only by inference from the inspired teachings. We know that the first Person of the Blessed Trinity is Our Father, the parent of the entire race, without distinction of any kind; and that we are all children of the one household, watched and attended by a loving parent, and with a common destiny in the future. If we had that truth brought home to us as pointedly as are many of the common truths of our nature, what a very different world would be ours. To have a rich, powerful, wise, and loving father is the greatest blessing a child can secure; to know that every moment of our career is absolutely in his care, that he is more solicitous than we of our whole welfare, that he hungers for our love, is proud of our success, and shamed by our failure, is comfort and joy for a lifetime. Few children of the earth are blessed with such a parent in the natural

order; and yet it is the simple fact that the only Being Who can justly claim absolute rights over us as the everlasting Parent, is just this sort of a Father. All our days of time and eternity are in His hands, and the wants of each instant it is His delight to supply. "For your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." "For the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God."—John xvi.

3. Men acknowledge the office of the Father, and admit His rights over us, but rarely do they act upon their admissions. They slaughter one another in war, they cultivate race hatreds, they despise their brethren of a darker skin, they are eager for slavery, envious, ready to cheat others of money and rights, and stop at few crimes against their brethren. They reject the high destiny provided for them by their Father, in order to revel in the miserable pleasures of sin. Only in the ranks of the truly religious does the Father receive any real acknowledgment of His rights and gratitude for His favors. "Because you are sons, God hath sent the spirit of His Son to your hearts, crying: Abba, Father."—Gal. iv. We must make up to Him for the shameful indifference of His other children. Therefore the Church prays on this day that "the confession of the Holy and Eternal Trinity, and Its undivided Unity may profit us to the salvation of body and soul."

II.—The Son.

1. It is the nature of a good father to exhaust himself in showing his love for his children. If this

be true of the human father, how much truer is it of the Father of all men. It was enough for Him to have given us an everlasting kingdom, but He added to the gift and exhausted His power at the same moment, by giving us His Eternal Son. We shall never know until judgment the immensity of this Gift.

Two blessings which are included in It we can all understand. The passing of Jesus Christ through this world taught us once for all how to live, and settled all problems of time and eternity for us, as far as these might trouble and terrify the soul. From the beginning men complained of the miseries of living, brought upon them by sin and its consequences. They had a right and a reason to complain; but Christ put an end to the right and the reason by His life and His teachings. The life modelled on His justifies and explains itself, and is the wonder and the delight of mankind. The mysteries that puzzled men as to their coming hither, their departure hence, their condition in the next world are mysteries no longer. Jesus has made all things plain. "His disciples say to Him: Behold now Thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb."—John xvi.

2. The Father loved us enough to have His Son assume our nature, and the Son loved us so tenderly as to accept the human race as His inheritance. "And thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."—Isa. lxii. What man does not love the gracious inheritance left him by his father? What joy does he not take out of it, and with what care he preserves and increases its beauty! This is our wonderful dignity, to be the inheritance of Christ; to give

Him deep joy as He gazes from heaven on its loveliness; to have lavished on us His forethought, His care, His riches. The history of the world testifies to the beauty He has wrought in His Church, to the endurance of its wonderful foundations, proof against all tempests, to the rich decoration of its walls, to the bravery, holiness, simplicity of its people. He shares the world with us, as the children of His Father, and we share heaven with Him because we are His brethren. "And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."—John xiv.

3. That the Father has made us His children and secured for us a happy eternity, that the Son has taken us for His inheritance and made our lives complete and beautiful, does not end our complaining or rouse our gratitude. As Christians we share in the honors secured for us by Christ, only on certain conditions. Poverty, the closest friend of mankind, must be our delight, labor our steady companion, and sinlessness our ordinary condition. How many have rejected Christ and all share in His kingdom rather than give up the pursuit of wealth, the love of idleness, the indulgence of sin! And they complain bitterly that He who could have given us riches, idleness, and luxury, out of His great abundance, could condemn us to poverty, labor, and self-denial. Well, it is given to man to choose between the two sets of conditions. The poor are at least free, the laborious are healthy, and the sinless are at peace, with heaven before them, and little regret at parting with the world; while the rich are slaves to their estates, the idle are a prey to disease, and the sinful are ever in disorder, stilling their

own consciences and brushing away the thoughts of death. For one remains the safety of eternity, for the other the terrors. "I am the vine, you the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth." —John xv.

III.—The Holy Ghost.

1. The Father in His love sent us the Son, and in turn the Son sends us the Holy Ghost, as if to complete His work. But you cannot separate the Three Divine Persons from one another, as they are the One God. "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me," said Our Lord. "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever. The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him; but you shall know him, because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you."—John xiv. The Father sent us upon this earth with a perfect nature, which we wounded by sin; the Son healed us, organized us, opened heaven to us, and the Holy Ghost fits us for all our offices, and develops in us every virtue and power needed in our pilgrimage. Just as into a rich valley of the wilderness comes the young heir, and with sturdy arm clears the land of timber, ploughs up the fruitful soil, and plants the vigorous seed; and then the sun, the rain, and the balmy airs of summer coming, the valley bursts into glorious bloom and ripening harvest. This is a figure

of the work of the Holy Ghost, Whose rich heat and infinite power have given to the Church's soil the verdure and the harvests of twenty centuries.

2. Yet we hardly acknowledge Him, even where some love of the Father and the Son works in us. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—1 Cor. iii. Most of us are forced to admit our ignorance. Yet all that we admire in the history of the Church, in the lives of the saints of God, is His work. The miraculous beauty of the Blessed Virgin's soul, the glories of John the Baptist, the courage, steadfastness, success, fidelity of the Apostles, the heroic endurance of the martyrs, the genius of St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. Francis de Sales, the works of St. Francis Xavier, the sweet holiness of Aloysius, Rose of Lima, Kateri Tegakwita, all these are His; the spiritual glories that have honored our own lives in the innocence and sanctity of the humble souls of our own neighborhood, and in our own hard-won virtues, have only one source, which is in Him. And all the glory that is to come until the end of the world, like the rays of light from the sun, must be referred to this wonderful sun of the Trinity. "It shall come to pass after this that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Moreover, upon my servants and handmaids in those days I will pour forth My Spirit."—Joel ii.

3. After all these statements it is easy to understand the dignity which attaches to our poor human nature. The children of God the Father, the inherit-

ance of God the Son, the temples of the Holy Ghost, we enjoy an intimacy with the Blessed Trinity which makes any violence done to us, either by oppressors or by our own sins, nearly sacrilegious. "But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy: which you are."—1 Cor. iii. Did we fully understand and appreciate this holy and precious intimacy, we could hardly show such indifference; but so poorly do we appreciate it, that we know little hesitation in disgracing the temple of God with lust, drunkenness, and many other abominations. With what patience the Blessed Trinity endures us! God will not force us to understand and love Him. Of our own knowledge and will we must turn to Him, and permit Him to work in us through the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit in their bowels: and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: that they may walk in my commandments, and keep my judgments, and do them: and that they may be my people, and I may be their God."—Ezec. xi.

Corpus Christi.

He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.—John vi. 55, 56.

OUTLINE.

1. This beautiful feast sadly reminds us that a great part of the former Christian world rejected the Christ of the Eucharist.
2. And for three centuries their children have starved for want of this Blessed Body.
3. The consequences can be seen by a comparison of the vigorous life of the Church to-day with the disintegration of the sects.
4. The gracious influence of the Blessed Eucharist on the soul of man.
5. The honor and consideration It secures for the human body.
6. To appreciate this thoroughly compare the treatment by the world in any age of the bodies of men.
7. Who, then, can understand the Christian men, falsely called reformers that rejected the Christ of the Blessed Sacrament after an adoration of fifteen centuries?
8. Their motives similar to those of the Jews who rejected and slew the Christ of Judea.
9. We may class with both Jews and heretics the faithless and indifferent Catholics who never approach Christ in the Eucharist.

I.—The Eucharist and the Church.

1. The celebration of the feast of the Body of Christ reminds us that many millions of people, who profess faith in Christ, deny His Presence in the Eucharist. Catholics declare that Jesus is here upon our altars, His Body and Blood hidden under the veils of the bread and the wine; this truth most Protestants deny. What frightful consequences result from this denial! If the Protestant world is right in its rejection of the Eucharist, how utterly shameful has been the history of fifteen centuries of Chris-

tianity, how stupid is the present faith of those who worship the bread and wine as the Son of God; and if we have the true doctrine, what shall be said of the criminal folly of those who rejected the Christ of the Eucharist, and deprived their descendants of this precious food for over three centuries? If we are right, then these unfortunates outside the Church are like the faithless disciples described in the Scriptures. When Christ had plainly told them of his intention to feed them upon His Body and His Blood, they said one to another, This saying is hard, and who can hear it? "After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." From the hour of the so-called Reformation the backsliders, innocent and guilty alike, have been walking farther and farther away from the Christ.

2. Their own history is a proof of their separation from Christ. "Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." For many centuries the whole Christian world believed in the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ upon the altar, and felt that the strength of Christendom had its source in this Sacrament. In two decades of disorderly commotion the knot of reformers had overthrown for millions the doctrine of ages. Not by conviction did they overthrow it, but by compulsion, by civic disorder and political intrigue. In consequence while the Catholic millions have fed upon this divine food, their Protestant brethren have starved without it; and the signs of this starvation are very clear in the present condition of the sects. They are without unity, and have tried

to make disunion a virtue; their churches are bare of symbol and dead as a public hall in significance; in England and America one-half their possible number is plunged in indifference, materialism, atheism; it is hard to tell what many of those professing their faith believe of the Christ; it is uncertain if they have any longer a Christian standard of morality; and in a hundred ways they show the starvation of three hundred years of separation from the Christ of the Eucharist. They have been eating manna in the desert thinking it the Son of God, and they are dead.

3. On the contrary, see the vigorous life of the Church of Christ. In what honor is the See of Peter at this moment; what streams of light flow from it into the world; look at the unity, the fervor, the faith, the steady, logical beliefs, the certainty, the cohesion, to be found in the Catholic American body with all its shortcomings. Yet how often in each century since Luther has the downfall of the Catholic "superstition" been foretold. These present graces the Church owes to that Living Presence of which the world cannot deprive her. She owes to it also all that is admirable in her history and in her daily life: her wonderful missions and missionaries, her great movements for the benefit of mankind, her wonderful temples, her sublime ritual, her splendid literatures, her art, her music, her miracles. The world is never tired praising them. So that if the Protestants have been like the disciples who walked no more with Jesus, the faithful Church has been like St. Peter, and the twelve. "Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the

words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of God."—John vi.

II.—The Eucharist and Man.

1. From its effect upon the Church, which is the congregation of all the faithful, we can follow and understand the effect of the Lord's Body and Blood upon the individual Catholic. In the beginning God the Creator made man like to Himself by the godlike qualities conferred on the soul; in the Incarnation He made His Divine Son like us in His body; and in the Eucharist He gives us this Sacred Body as food to the soul, and thus in a manner makes Christ and His humblest disciple one. We become through the Eucharist the intimate friend of the Saviour, in actual touch with Him. We are made the personal friends of the King, and the whole world is compelled to acknowledge the intimacy and friendship, because we have grown like Him in purity of soul and moral control of the body. Alone in the ranks of the Catholic Christians does the world see the chastity, discipline, order, peace which mark a people under the dominion of the Holy Spirit; the marriage tie is there observed as Christ commanded, and divorce is unknown, which ravages the rest of mankind like a violent plague; and the human race is properly protected in the womb, in birth, in the home, in the school, and in society, nor exposed to the demoniac crimes of unnatural parents, atheistic physicians, and the other wolves of the human wilderness. The Catholic soul, fed upon the Body of Christ, has the eye to see, the light to follow, and the heart to do, the right.

2. The human body shares in these honors conferred by the Eucharist upon the soul. Living and dead the Church insists, has always insisted, and forced the world to follow her lead, that the body of man should everywhere be treated with respect. All Christian lands have written her commands on this point in their statute-books. We all know the respect accorded to the dead body, even that of the pagan, which has been the temple of the Holy Ghost. The body fed upon the Body of Christ is treated in its last conditions of sickness and death with the tenderest respect. Its dying moments are watched with devotion and solaced by prayer; when life has fled, it is decently prepared for the grave, interred with holy rite in blessed ground, and its long rest is guarded for centuries. The friend of the King is not to be treated like a dog, or worse, hastily dumped, while life's heat lingers in the inert members, into the first trench, and then forgotten ere the earth has settled upon his corpse. Though it is to become the food of worms, and slowly turn to ashes, it is still more sacred than the holy places of Judea, for Christ the Lord spent many an hour in this ruined temple; and in death it breathes the fragrance of His presence more powerfully than any soil pressed by His holy feet.

3. How significant all this is we may see from the treatment which the world offers to the poor bodies of men, when there is no Christ of the Eucharist by to warn and condemn. In ancient days one might have the most ornate burial rites that money could buy, if he or his friends had the money; lacking which, the dead man was thrown wherever conven-

ience suggested. The Church shamed the pagans into more decent treatment of the dead poor. The pagans of our day have as little respect for the bodies of the dead as their ancestors. In public hospitals doctors and students feel no shame, no pity, in their use of the bodies which the law hands over to them for the dissecting-table, treating them as the meanest merchandise; the burial of paupers is a burlesque in public institutions; wherever the atheist or materialist has control one would prefer in death to be a pet dog, so much more honor is shown to the body of a favorite animal. The same spirit is visible on every side in the use men make of human bodies while yet they live and labor. The huge industries of our time, as of old when kings built pyramids, seize and grind to powder the bodies of their work-people without a thought of regret, but rather with joy. The engines of atheistic progress destroy life; the truth, like the Blessed Eucharist, gives life eternal.

III.—The Crime of the Heretics.

1. It would take many sermons to follow the influence of the Blessed Eucharist upon the lives of men, and upon the corporate life of the Church. What has been said shows how clearly the promises of Our Lord have been fulfilled under our own eyes; that "if any man eat of it [the Blessed Eucharist] he may not die," that "he shall live forever," that "he hath everlasting life," that Jesus "will raise him up at the last day," that "he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him." It seems very strange that the men, who in the sixteenth century

departed from the fold of the true Church, should have given up this beautiful gift of Christ of all others. Men might quarrel with public honors to Mary, with papal supremacy, with confession, with fasting, as their temperaments inclined, and in the end reject them; but to surrender the sacrament which gave them the Body and Blood of Christ would seem fairly impossible. One would think that every effort ought to have been made to preserve this jewel from the general wreck of doctrine, that excuses might have been found for retaining it, so that mankind might still have left the treasure of the human Christ, no matter what the fate of the visible Church. On the contrary, Christ was flung out from among the people with indecent speed. The most beautiful, powerful, and ancient doctrine of Christianity received less consideration than the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

2. The explanation of this treatment is to be found in the summary trial and execution of the Saviour by the Jewish leaders. The parallel between the two instances is very close. The Scribes and Pharisees had seen the miracles, heard the words, felt the power of the Son of God, and were utterly conquered by His majesty; but they hardened their hearts against Him, as they were determined to accept no Messiah that did not secure their privileges, and acknowledge their power. They were sinners against light. Unable to crush Him, or to win Him, unwilling to accept His doctrines of holiness, there was no alternative left but to murder Him. They could not control Him, and while He lived their power over the common people was gone. Therefore they put Him to death. In

the same way the leaders of the so-called Reformation rejected and slew in the hearts of the people the Christ of the Eucharist. They kept the form of the bread and the wine, but they banished Christ, kept the supper-table but banished the altar, kept the priest but banished the sacrifice, held the temple but dismissed the God of the temple. They could not bear to look upon Him whom they had slain, they could not endure the horror of approaching Him in the awful sacrifice; and so, in spite of the common love for the Christ of the Eucharist, of the witness of history, of the evidences of its power on every side, the Eucharist was banished that the leaders might put their consciences to sleep forever.

3. Even with this explanation who can understand the Jews, who can enter into the corrupted hearts of the Reformationists? They condemned their cause when they drove out the Christ, and extinguished the tabernacle light, which had burned so many centuries. Who can explain also the wretched Catholics who never approach the holy table, and whose neglect in earlier times forced upon the statute-book of the Church that law which sends every Catholic to communion once a year under penalties? Never did our enemies and persecutors inflict upon us so shameful a blow! One would think that the Church would be forced to enact a law keeping us from crowding the altar-rail! Instead, there are souls so dull, so wrapped up in earthly affairs, that the Eucharist has no savor, no attraction for them; therefore, they must be well-nigh dragged to meet that Christ whom they may never know until the meeting at judgment.

The Assumption.

A great sign appeared in heaven: A Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.—Apoc. xii. 1.

OUTLINE.

1. Catholics alone venerate the sanctified nature of the Mother of God.
2. Her nature was perfect, without sin, and without tendency to sin.
3. Study of her character will reveal new perfections until the end of time.
4. It was fitting that the grave's corruption should not touch her body.
5. The general belief in her Assumption.
6. Its natural effect upon the Apostles and the first Christians.
7. The Blessed Virgin owed her great honors to her unique likeness to Jesus.
8. This likeness to Christ is our only guarantee of a holy resurrection.
9. The sun of Christ's resurrection finds its moon in Mary's assumption.

I.—The Sinless Virgin-Mother.

1. Many who profess a firm belief in the divinity of Christ are unable to understand the honor, public and private, which Catholics pay to the Mother of God, or the great sanctity which she attained. In return Catholics cannot understand the complete indifference of the Protestant world to the Mother of God. It has honored many inferior women of different nations with statues and other testimonials of esteem, but for the Mother of Christ it seems to have little feeling above that of contempt. In society the mother of the reigning king, or of the national hero, is not without special honor. Americans have in fact heard much more of Martha Washington and Mary, the wife and mother of our great leader, than of Mary of Nazareth. There must be degrees of distinction,

and there must be degrees of holiness: and it may be taken for granted that in distinction and in holiness no woman that ever lived was worthy to touch the hem of the Virgin's garment. When a person or a society fails to observe just distinctions in important matters, confusion of life is the natural and inevitable result. Failing to give the Blessed Mother proper veneration, the Protestant world finds itself full of contradictions; and in the spiritual life it presents a dead level of the commonplace, in which stands a mutilated figure of the Christ, like an obelisk on a desert plain. Catholics alone commemorate the dignities and honors which God Himself heaped upon the Queen of angels and saints.

2. We believe that all men are born in original sin, while over her sin never had any dominion; that in consequence of sin men have a hard struggle to reach perfection, while the sinless Mother's nature ran like a river to the sea from the perfect to the more perfect; that while the natural tendency is toward the gratifying of our own will, all her tendencies were for doing perfectly the will of God. As the Mother of the Lord, as the Virgin incapable of sin, as the great saint whose will added to the glory of her nature new glories of sanctity, she is entitled to the reverence of the followers of Christ, and indeed of the whole human race, whom her life and character so honored. There can be no insignificance about her in any way, for she is the Mother of the King; and while that may not mean much to the philosophers of society, it means great things in this case. It is our belief that this perfect woman responded perfectly to each grace that God bestowed upon her, that Eve, fresh from the

hand of God, was not so beautiful, innocent, and holy as she at her birth, and that in the moment of the Incarnation she was more than worthy of the royal salute of the Archangel Gabriel: "Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women."—Luke i.

3. It is to be regretted that, if God intended her place in the world to be as obscure as some consider it, He should not have made His angels more circumspect in their language. Her place in the gospels is that of a royal personage, in history it is that of a conqueror, in the Church's traditions it is that of a celestial queen. It is a vain pretence that her glory obscures or diminishes for many souls the glory of her Son. This is an impeachment of human reason. The glory of the stars does not eclipse the glory of the sun for any human being, and only idiots prefer the better to the best. We are not done honoring the achievements of good missionaries because Francis Xavier converted millions, nor has Christ forbidden us to forget goodness in men because He alone is Good. In all the degrees of holiness this Woman stands first; and her eminence is such that the second in the line does but kiss her feet. If the little flower which lights up the meadow will give the poet and the scientist occasion for study and rhapsody until time ends, we count it as certain that time cannot exhaust the beauties of the Virgin's soul. "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array." —Can. vi.

II.—The Abandoned Grave.

1. Catholics have some knowledge of Mary's gifts, but the world has none, to whom she is only the simple mother of Nazareth. Her perfections, her gifts, her office have been well impressed on Catholic hearts by the Holy Spirit, and have made the assumption of her body into heaven before death had chilled it, as natural to us as to the first Christians. Her beautiful body had given Christ His Body, and as death did not disfigure Him, nor hold more than momentary dominion over Him, it was fitting that a similar honor should be granted to the holy body which conceived Him. Other women bear children who must lie down to corruption; this woman gave to earth its imperishable Man. Sin alone deserved death, and animality dissolution; in her there was neither sin nor concupiscence, and she was entitled through God's favor to Eve's forfeited privileges. So clear and sensible do all these reasonings appear to the Catholic mind that we wonder at the blindness which accepts Christ as the Son of God, and then shuts Him off from all human connection, as if He had come straight from heaven full-grown, and owed reverence and love to nothing human. To study the home of Nazareth is to look for the glories and privileges of Mary's life and career. "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."—Luke x.

2. It was thus the first Christians reasoned; and when they had seen death reluctantly claim her, as he had claimed Her Son, when they had laid her away

in the tomb with tears and hymns, they waited in patience and in expectation for revelations of joy, akin to those of the Easter morning. The tradition of the Church tells us that on the third day they came to the tomb as usual to pray and sing hymns, and found there only a bed of flowers; while from the heaven came the echoes of a song of joy and triumph as the angels and saints welcomed their Queen. There was no great surprise among these early believers, and there is even less among us, who are without the strong faith of the first days, at the escape of Mary from the grave and its blight. It was in the power of the Lord of life and death so to honor His Mother, and all the indications of her life pointed to an early resurrection. He had conferred such honors, though not so speedily, on others, who were less than she. "A throne was set for the King's mother, and she sat on His right hand."—3 Kings ii.

3. We can understand what a tremendous effect the assumption of the Blessed Mother's body into heaven, before corruption had touched it, must have had upon the Apostles and upon the early Christians. They had seen the Son die, had placed His Body in the tomb, and had been the terrified and incredulous witnesses to His Resurrection. In the terror of the days succeeding the Passion, in the complete bewilderment which fell upon them after His first appearance from the dead, it required the gentle reproaches and the loving encouragement of Jesus, to introduce order into their chaotic thoughts and tumultuous emotions. It was many days before they felt sure of themselves, and it required the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to give them final and

indefectible faith in this marvel of the Resurrection. But now for many years the indwelling of the Spirit had given cohesion to their thoughts, and had clarified and strengthened their human emotions. The habits of belief had been formed, and they brought to the tomb of Mary the trained minds of experienced apostles, not the dazed minds of simple fishermen. They had seen what God could do for Himself, and were now to see what He could do for the Virgin Mother of God. When they found the empty and flower-strewn grave, and heard the singing of the angelic choirs, nothing was added to their faith in Christ; but what boundless enthusiasm and gratitude must have filled their hearts that they had been made witnesses of another resurrection from the dead, and had received this second pledge from their Master of the great reward which awaited them in the days to come. The Blessed Mother had anticipated the glory of the last day. "I am alive and was dead, and behold I am living forever."—Apoc. i.

III.—Our Eternal Hope.

1. The resurrection of the body for which all Christians hope is the reward of those who in this life have made themselves by the grace of God very like to Christ. To the lost souls of men the resurrection will be their direst punishment, to the saved it will be in itself a splendid happiness. The difference between our restoration and the Assumption of the Virgin Mother is a precise expression of the vast difference between our likeness to Christ and hers. She escapes what we must endure; the corruption of the

grave and the long centuries of separation for body and soul; because she was one of the few whose likeness to Christ is so exact and so exalted, that it would seem strange if her death and restoration did not in some fashion carry out the likeness. It is the opinion of many wise teachers that had man continued in the sinless condition of the first parents at their creation, death and elevation to glory would have come to us very much as they came to Mary, without pain or shadow of change, and even without the formality of falling asleep. This second Eve had, like her Son, never known the dominion of sin, she had suffered the anguish of a thousand ordinary deaths beneath His cross, she carried on in her long life a perfect apostolate far superior to that which the Apostles themselves carried on, she had been made so like Jesus in innocence, virtue, labor, and power that the Church felt justified in believing her and calling her the Queen of angels, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; therefore, it needed but this last honor of a speedy resurrection to make the likeness between her and her Son complete and perfect. She owed her assumption not only to her position as His Mother, but also to her unique resemblance to Him. This entire paragraph has been put into a single sentence by the mighty eloquence of St. Paul: "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection."—Rom. vi.

2. This likeness to Christ is the only guarantee we have that the resurrection will be for us honor and glory. It is well to take comfort from the belief in a final restoration of sanctified humanity, and to look

forward to a reunion of all who have loved us on this earth; at the same time we must make sure that this belief is something more than a mere sentiment, a verbal consolation for passing melancholy. Innocent and holy as was the Blessed Mother, and lifted far above the greatest saints in the quality of her holiness, she achieved her shining honors only by a life of wondrous struggle, amid bitter and overwhelming sorrows. It is well to rejoice that Christ has shared with her His glory of immediate resurrection from the dead, and has made her assumption so glorious an influence in the Christian world; but if she paid the full price for these honors by passing through the shadows of Calvary, it is quite certain that we shall not attain to the glory of a perfected human nature in heaven without a full measure of that labor and pain which accompany the work of salvation. We must become like to Christ in His sinlessness, if we are to be with Him in His Kingdom. We must get away from our sluggish routines and plunge earnestly into the activities of the spiritual life. St. Paul has also summed up this paragraph in a single sentence: "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved."—Rom. x.

3. The honor of the Assumption was not conferred upon our dear Mother for her own satisfaction alone. All her children were to have a share in it to the very end of time, as can be seen in the popular delight over the celebration of this day. One may reason at will over the probabilities of the Assumption and its fitness or unfitness, but the influence of the tradition in the Church is something ever to be admired. The

doctors of the law have discussed conclusions and agreed and differed a thousand times, but the faithful remember only that the third day Christ rose again from the dead, and that His Mother was always like Him; and so the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has made of the tradition a practical fact, and celebrates the Assumption long before it will be declared a doctrine of the faith. Therefore, the soft light of that empty tomb, around which once stood the adoring Apostles, illumines the Christian world, cheers all hearts, sheds a radiance on art, inspires many a poet, and fills the saints with ecstasy. The sun of the resurrection finds its soft-beaming moon in the assumption of Mary. The joy of those who heard celestial hymns above the empty sepulchre on the first assumption morning is repeated in our joy, who hear the heavenly hymns of the universal church on this glorious day. Compared with our faith and hope, so strengthened by this beautiful miracle, how wretched are the shifting beliefs of those who have forgotten the very name of Christ's dear Mother, and can hardly persuade themselves that even the Christ rose from the dead.

The Angels.

Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.—Dan. vii. 10.

It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—Luke xvi. 22.

OUTLINE.

1. The angelic nature is of wonderful beauty.
2. The office of the angels is to serve God and man.
3. And sacred history has many examples of this service.
4. The angels were once subject to the weaknesses of a finite nature.
5. Some rebelled against God, through pride, or through contempt of us.
6. Their punishment was eternal, as was the reward of the faithful angels.
7. Who cannot but love us after their own sorrows.
8. Another bond between us is that Jesus is their King, Mary their Queen.
9. We should make good use of their powerful friendship.

I.—Nature and Office of the Angels.

1. Man is not the only intelligent creature in the service of God. Lord of the earth though he is, his power and his nature are very inferior to the spiritual creatures who serve God face to face, and whose duties are summed up in their beautiful name: angels, or messengers. In this month the Church of God sojourning on this earth pays them direct homage, both for their beautiful nature and its union with God, and for the great love and many services they have borne mankind. It is only the great Church which takes note of all things in connection with her children, and gives to all things their due importance. To the great saints and martyrs who served God and man

with such distinction she accords the honors of the altar, that men may never forget their services or their example; and to the angels she pays similar honors for similar reasons. In God's creation, they are the most beautiful and most powerful. All God's creatures, from the meanest insect that crawls, do Him honor, and the beauty of the least displays the power and goodness of the Creator. What honor, then, does He not receive from these highest of all created excellences, pure spirits, unhampered by our conditions, strong, swift, free, and beautiful as light. "Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."—Exod. xxviii. "Behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them."—Luke ii.

2. Their office is to serve God forever, as ministering spirits, and to give us aid in our pilgrimage through life. At first sight it seems incredible that these splendid spirits should concern themselves with us. Yet Christ Himself tells us that "there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."—Luke xv. And St. John gives us a precise picture of their work for us. "I saw seven angels standing in the presence of God; and there were given to them seven trumpets. And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel."—Apoc. viii. It is clear that God would have all His creatures bound to one another in mu-

tual love and service. The animal world serves man in various ways, and receives in return the service of care and tenderness. The angels watch over and guard us with their superior strength, we render service to one another in the hours of need, and God has the care of all in His mighty hands. Thus are we all, creatures of God, bound to one another in loving service, in true fellowship. "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."—Ps. xc.

3. There is nothing lowering in that service. The soul of man is immortal. Whatever service is rendered to him will have immortal gratitude, which is more than the service of the world can offer to any man. The angels feel honored in this duty of helping men, the beloved brethren of their great King, "bought with a great price" from the slavery of Satan. What an honor to us that these glorious spirits serve us, and fill our pathway with heaven's own light, though the world may have given us only its darkness. Hence, the experience of the saints and the Holy Scriptures are full of the special services rendered by the angels to men. The Archangel Michael took charge of the body of Moses for its secret burial in the land of Moab, and has charge of the souls entering and leaving Purgatory: Gabriel is well known as the angel of the Incarnation; Raphael was the loving guide of young Tobias; an angel settled the doubts of St. Joseph, and directed him in his care of Jesus; angels were present at the Agony in the garden, at the Resurrection and the Ascension. They have been messengers of woe as well as of gladness; to Egypt on that fatal night when the first-born died, and to

the camp of the Assyrians, which lost nearly two hundred thousand men. "O Lord my God, Who makest Thy angels spirits, and Thy ministers a burning fire."—Ps. ciii.

II.—History of the Angels.

1. If we wonder at the deep sympathy with which the angels regard us, it is because we are unacquainted with their history, and its tragic ending before they were confirmed in the grace of God. Their nature at its best is only the nature of creatures, limited, weak, and helpless of itself. It was once within their power to sin. Close as they stood to God, they had before them the risk of falling away from Him, and could only retain their union with Him by effort of the will. They were open to sins of pride and vanity in their own power and beauty, and they could indulge in envy and hate of others. That same probation over which we grieve, and have reason to grieve, was their lot, as it seems to be the lot of all the intelligences in God's service. He will have only free and loving service from us. The angels with all their natural glory were no better off than ourselves. Perhaps their lot was worse, for they had no sin of Adam to taint their nature and make goodness appear undesirable, no excuse for any wandering of the heart from God. When they sinned it was with eyes wide open to their own deep ingratitude.

2. Their sin was rebellion against the power of their Creator. They would no longer serve Him, preferring to follow one of His creatures. It is strange to learn that, according to some Fathers of

the Church, mankind was the indirect cause of this rebellion. It is thought that the Eternal Father made known to His angels the future race of inferior beings which He was to create, their miserable fall from grace, and the sending of His Divine Son to lift them up again by assuming their nature; and He asked the angels to adore this God-Man as their King. This was the occasion which brought out the terrible display of Satan's pride. He was the noblest angel in heaven. "Thou wast in the pleasures of the Paradise of God; every precious stone was thy covering."—Ezec. xxviii. He found himself too glorious to accept another king, or to submit to the wisdom of God, and he raised the standard of rebellion against Him to whom he owed all his beauty and power. The Scriptures tell the story. "There was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world: and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."—Apoc. xii.

3. Thus they were defeated, and thus was sin punished swiftly and terribly, as it ever is where intelligence and power unite to flout the living God. The seraph of heaven became the leader of hell. "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven."—Luke x. And how is he described in the same Book which gives him so much glory? "He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he

speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father thereof."—John viii. Thus the King, Whom he rejected, describes him. With him into eternal woe went the angels whom he had seduced, while the faithful angels under Michael's leadership received the happy gift of everlasting fidelity to God, being made unable to sin any more. The rebellion which convulsed heaven tested their metal, and found it ring true. Here are our own history and our own probation anticipated. In the next world we are to be the associates of Michael or of Lucifer.

III.—The Angels Love Us.

1. With such a history it is impossible that the angels could help having a deep sympathy for us, now passing through a crisis like that which once troubled heaven; impossible that they should fail to help us, with the memory of their own great tragedy engraven upon their nature. It was not necessary even that God should have formally offered them the office and duty of aiding us in life, death, and judgment. "A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind." Having the loving nature which seeks out the miseries and needs of others, and having the power to relieve and solace, it is quite probable that they asked in pure love for the honor and joy of serving us. Moreover, two beings of our own human nature had become the object of their adoration and love. Jesus was their King in all the glory of His perfect humanity, and Mary has been made by His power their glorious Queen. For love of these two, Son and Mother, the angels cannot but love their brethren,

and cannot but exert all their immense power that we may be an honor in this world and in the next.

2. How are we not honored in the service of these beautiful beings! With the King of the Angels upon our altars, we have in addition the service of the angelic host for our daily comfort and consolation. "You are come to the company of many thousands of angels."—Heb. xii. The beautiful world is full of their heavenly radiance, for they have special guardianship over men, over temples, and schools, and cities and towns, over vessels in the depths of the sea, and in particular over the innocent children. "See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven."—Matt. xviii. They are far more truly our friends than the children with whom we have had companionship so many years, and upon whom we rely for aid in the dark moments of life. The angels are always with us, night and day, closer than relatives or friends can ever be, and better able to render us proper help in sorrow of mind and sickness of body. Their love and duty go together in our case. If we are so often cast down, and so hopeless in our troubles, we have only ourselves to blame, for we rarely think of the loving companion at our side, often disbelieve in His very existence, and never beseech His affectionate aid. If we do not ask, how shall we receive! Every being has its own degree of self-respect, and will not thrust itself or its services on those who are sceptical or indifferent. "Behold I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of

him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him. But if thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee."—Exod. xxiii.

3. In this world we have need of all the strength and consolation which God has provided for us. We are walking through a land very pleasant to the body but very trying to the soul; yet so blessed with sweet springs of comfort for the traveller that he alone suffers who refuses to pause and refresh himself where and when God intended. If we ignore the angels, we deprive ourselves of much help and sympathy, and we do ignore them. We fail to teach the children concerning them, we make no acknowledgment of their many services, and the colder ones among us relegate them to the kingdom of the fairies and goblins. We conclude, as so many do with regard to God, that these splendid beings are too high to take notice of human littleness; forgetting that with God, with His angels, and with the wise, there is nothing in the universe which can be called little. Only the infinite power of God could call out of nothing a grain of sand, fashion it with so much beauty, and send it back to nothingness. And we are the delight of the angels. "The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them."—Ps. xxxiii.

The Feast of All Saints.

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands.—Apoc. vii. 9.

OUTLINE.

1. This feast specially emphasizes the facts, that God made us, and that our destiny is immortal.
2. For those who have achieved that destiny by entering heaven, we have crowns and hymns of praise to-day.
3. They are not the great saints of history, but the glorified millions of the common people.
4. In life and death they won greater triumphs than such conquerors as Alexander and Hannibal.
5. Their triumphs were threefold, because in the first place they triumphed over the flesh and the world.
6. In the second place they won heaven against the temptations and trials of sickness and death.
7. Their last and most glorious victory was won at the dreadful judgment seat of God.
8. The character of the prize they won when compared with the prizes bestowed on its votaries by the world.

I.—Democracy's Feast.

1. It ought particularly to be remembered on this day that religion is founded on two facts: that God made us; that our destiny is immortal. In recognition of the first we build temples to acknowledge God's sovereignty, we keep His commandments, He has the first place in our hearts. To accomplish the second according to His will we frequent the sacraments and so prepare ourselves for eternal life. Love for God and respect for our own immortality are in us the springs of true love and respect for our kind; we cannot insult the image of God or treat it with degra-

dation without insulting and degrading our own nature. We cannot neglect it in suffering; we are bound to help it onward in every possible way. Hence the wonderful charity for all men that was introduced into the world by the Christian; which finds no obstacles to its diffusion in color or condition, in opposition, ingratitude, or persecution; which attends to all forms of human need, and will save men in spite of themselves; which crosses the grave, and brings aid to the souls in purgatory; and which on this day rejoices in the victory of those who have scaled the heights of heaven.

2. Thus, for those still in the conflict we have aid, sympathy, encouragement; for the immortals we have crowns, and hymns of praise. They are the dear ones of our every-day life, not the great saints whose honors are world-wide; the children who once made beautiful the ways of earth, but left us before innocence had departed from them; the faithful son and daughter whose devotion was the prop of age, yet were taken from us; the friend that loved us, the brother that was part of our life, the wife or the husband who carried the strongest beat of our hearts into the grave with them. The beggar that lay in the streets so wretched that none cared to know his name, the poor boy that worked his insignificant life away on three dollars a week, the old woman of many prayers and much feebleness who cumbered the road to the church; all these ordinary people, now in eternal rest, saints who at least achieved heaven, are to-day honored by the universal church. What a thrill enlivens the heart at the thought that the hand we touched last year, the babe we pressed, the common

ones of the earth are at this moment in everlasting glory.

3. All Saints' Day is the feast of democracy, the feast of the common people. We are approaching a democratic age in politics, but the Church is always the church of the people, no matter how successfully for a time the theologians of courts can conceal the principle. Her business is with each soul first, and afterward with the mass or the class. Master and slave are one to her; the children of either mount her altars. She never lets go her grip of the common people on earth, in purgatory, in heaven. Her missionaries seek out the remotest savages; commerce seeks out only the paying savages; kings seize only paying territory, and laugh at her record of children baptized just before death, even while admiring the daring of her priests. These are facts emphasized in the feast of this day.

II.—The City Three Times Won.

1. The world smiles also at the celebration of this hour which is for it only the feast of ashes, of the dead, of those whose little influence was wiped out either yesterday or ages ago. It asks cynically, Where are they? The spiritist replies, in space with the same natures as here; the pantheist, they have returned to the soul of the universe; the materialist, they are once more the elemental gases to reappear in new forms. Alone the Church declares with all true believers in Christ that they have won the eternal city, the new Jerusalem, and live in conscious, joyful activity in the presence of the Trinity and the court

of heaven. Conquerors have almost gone mad with joy over the conquest of a powerful city, and have called upon the nations to rejoice with them; but what city can ever compare with the city of God? therefore, what rejoicing should surpass his who has conquered it and made it eternally his own? The conquerors of the world are dust, with their cities and their triumphs; but a whole world, and heaven as well, comes forth this day to celebrate a triumph that will have no end, whose glory, in the mere material order, the circles of unfaith cannot pretend to equal.

2. Three times these common souls, our brethren, stood the ordeal of siege against the holy city. It is not a place to be taken by the indifferent and the lazy. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." They won it first in life by their steady fight against the flesh, the devil, and the world, by their adhesion to the law, by their devotion to duty. Whether rich or poor, they were blessed with poverty in spirit, accepting privation as a necessity, or desiring it as a gift; in spite of youth, or health, or high position, or opportunities of power, they were meek before all men; their sins and the sins of the world were real grief to them; they saw the injustices of the hour and cried aloud day and night for justice; they were merciful from the deep need they felt of mercy for themselves; they were clean of heart from a great love of God, and peaceful from their submission to His will; and they bore the persecution of this thoughtless world in silence, the persecution of ridicule and misunderstanding. It was not an easy struggle even for the weakest. The flesh is always with us, the devil near, and the world is

forever telling how easy it is to sin, how long is life and how far away death and judgment, and how many sin for the experience and live decent lives later. Against force and cunning, against open foe and stupid friend they prevailed.

3. A second time they won in sickness and death, which are the tests of good living. The infidel dies easy as an animal usually does, freed from mental suffering, stupefied with drugs; the Christian goes like a knight to his last struggle; the habits of years stand to him in the anguish of sickness, the delay of death; as he was meek, merciful, contrite, just, peaceful, and clean of heart, now his vision sees God more clearly than ever, and with fear completely drowned in exultation he marches forth to his last combat. His last great struggle may be against his own hopes, that the glorious vision of the new Jerusalem may have been only a dream, and that all must end in eternal death. Whatever form the battle takes he is an easy victor, and goes to his third and final siege with confidence. It is the judgment, whose terrors are only for those who have denied God, while they believed in him, who denied Satan yet never lost their dread of one day serving him, who denied sin all their lives as an invention of priestcraft, yet trembled at the power it had over their souls. The Christian here meets his last victory and receives his crown after the searching ordeal. The Friend Who judges him was his Captain in the struggle of life, and now confers on him the crown; the Satan he fought so bravely for himself and others receives his last defeat from him in the great Captain's presence; the sins which might have been his ruin are buried in the sea of his tears

and his penances. His judgment is his greatest victory, for it is the approbation of God Himself for the good fight of time.

III.—The New Jerusalem.

1. These dear friends of ours have achieved more in winning heaven than the conquerors of earth in all time; yet they are only the common millions of history, the mere dross of humanity as compared with those who achieved distinction by painting a canvas, chipping marble, or writing verse, statutes, orations. They have won all that which life is not and has not: youth, activity, perfection, which are eternal, without change, and enjoyed in the presence of God, amid the social life of the human race regenerated. "One day in thy courts is above a thousand" anywhere else, wept the psalmist, as he thought of heaven. When one stops for a moment in the rush of business to ask why all this commotion and worry, to what does it lead, what is its result; and seeing the handful of dust to which a man and his money are one day to be surely reduced, looks toward that heaven which the poorest can claim and labor for and win,—his first feeling ought to be pity for the temper which can turn men from the pursuit of things eternal to the pursuit of things of dust. The saints would not at this moment exchange their lot for Homer's place, or Peter's, or even Mary's, as these were on earth and as their memories are with men. Oh, well did Christ say, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these [minor] things shall be added unto you." These millions of the sanctified sought

and obtained that justice, and here to-day the great church pours at their feet the world's noblest treasures; hymn and music, painting and sculpture and temples, the love, memory, homage, tears, petitions of the living millions, who hope to win in a humble way the New Jerusalem. What sage or prince of earth ever received such honors? All these things have been added unto them.

2. Hail, then, to the day which reminds us of all this glory, and of our claim to and future possession of the same! Hail to the great church which established this anniversary in its keen and inexhaustible love of immortal man! Hail to the great souls that won the crown by a gallant fight, though they were the little ones of the earth, and their names no longer honor a human memory or a graven stone! Hail to the dear ones of our town, and parish, and household, whom we prized indeed living, but never saw in their glory because of our sins and unfaith! Hail to that heaven, where the best of earth has been since Christ ascended, and where alone the human heart finds everlasting life and rest! Praise to the God that made these things possible, and that out of all the discord of this world will yet bring eternal harmony!

The Souls in Purgatory.

Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice.—Ps. cxxix.

It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.—1 Mac. xii. 46.

OUTLINE.

1. Catholics believe in Purgatory, because the Church teaches it,
2. And because the Scriptures and the Fathers support the belief,
3. Which has also a strong support in the natural impulse to believe in a middle state.
4. The sorrow of the souls in purgatory.
5. They depend on us for aid, which we are bound to give.
6. The Church has provided the means to help them.
7. Hence, the widespread devotion to this great charity.
8. Its beautiful effects on our lives.
9. And the proper punishment of those who forget the dead.

I.—The Prison.

1. The outside world has made much fun of the Catholic belief in a middle state, and is reaping the harvest of its ridicule by its growing conviction that there is no state of any sort after the earthly one is ended. When we are asked why we believe in Purgatory we have the one answer, which applies to our belief in any doctrine: because the Church teaches it. There may be other reasons, but this is the highest and safest, and other authorities, but none infallible. With non-Catholics the Church is not a high authority. They accept nothing from the past but what they have themselves discovered. For us the Church on her human side is the sum of the best and highest

human effort in all ages, and on her spiritual side she is the infallible mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost. The error-mongers have travelled with her for twenty centuries, denouncing one doctrine after another; and she has seen them perish with their errors, while her glorious truths shine out brighter with each generation. If the principles and precedents, axioms and statutes, shaped and recorded by the jurists of the world since the beginning, meet with such respect and so bind the reason and will of men, it is only fair that the defined teachings of the great Church should have weight with all mankind. "The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."—1 Tim. iii.

2. The Holy Scriptures, however, support her teaching about a middle state, and the Fathers of earlier days wrote openly of their belief in it. It was known of heaven, for example, that "there shall not enter into it anything defiled."—Apoc. xxi. Our Lord Himself once declared that "he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come."—Matt. xii. The force of these utterances can be seen from a little reasoning. As to the latter there is an implication that some sins are to be forgiven after death, to which the sin against the Holy Ghost is an exception. As to the former, experience has taught us that few men die in a state of perfection with all their debts to justice paid. We may take the case of a sinner, whose life was utterly without grace until the last moment; an indifferent life, harmless as to human law, but neglectful of the divine law. Sickness brings to him the grace of understanding of his

sins and omissions, and after a few months of illness patiently borne, he passes to his judgment. It is certainly within God's power, which He often exercises for such men as the penitent thief, to wipe out all this man's obligations on the instant; but, neither in the order of nature, nor in the order of grace, does He work great miracles without sufficient cause. He allows His laws to work out their consequences, and their violators must pay all penalties. His aid is confined to giving them the gifts of repentance and patience, and the desire to expiate. Were the sinner mentioned to live another lifetime he could not expiate the consequences of his miserable life. It is only fair to conclude that he is given time for expiation in the place of purgation, in Purgatory. "Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing."—Matt. v.

3. This is the reasoning of the Fathers on the texts of Scripture. Hence, Catholics feel that the doctrine of the Church has solid support from the holy writings, from Christ, and from His great servants in the past. Human reason and human feeling also lend their aid to the doctrine of Purgatory. There is a natural impulse to pray for the dead, so strong in us that almost all nations have done it without any special revelation. The pagans of Greek and Roman days offered sacrifices for the dead, that their shades might be at peace; the Jews to this day have ceremonies in behalf of the dead; and Protestant Christians, in their memorial services for their departed, have to put a strong rein on the natural impulse to cry out with the Catholic: May their souls be at rest with Christ. As a matter of fact, many of them rise

above their own formal beliefs, and deliberately pray for their beloved. What a tribute to the doctrine of Purgatory! Thus supported by the impulse of nature in believers, by the practice of the past, and by the teaching of the great Church, the average Catholic regards with calmness the assault upon his belief in a middle state. "The Spirit of Truth will teach you all truth."—John xvi.

II.—The Prisoners.

1. On account of our many imperfections, of our forgotten sins, and of our debts to justice, most of us will spend some time in the prison of purgation. "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment."—Matt. xii. With so searching an account to render, it will be difficult even for the great saints to escape detention in the house of sorrow. We have therefore a personal interest in purgatory, deeper than in the spot where our bodies shall rest until the last day; and yet, so contrary is human nature, even when Christianized, that many spend more time in selecting and decorating the burial-place than in contemplating the prison of souls. Pause for a moment beside the body of this friend who has been dead but a day. He may have had many strange experiences in life, but none to equal those of the last twenty-four hours. In that brief time he has met death, translation from time to eternity, and judgment; he has stood face to face with the angels, the demons, and the Judge; and he has entered into the house of probation under the escort

of the Archangel Michael. Greater even than all these, he has shrunk before his first glance of sin, and fallen before the sight of his own sins; and into him has surged a fierce desire for justice against himself, a longing for complete expiation for the wrongs he has done to God and man. It would be impossible to describe in a volume the vast experiences which have come to him in so brief a time; yet how coldly we look on his quiet body dressed for the grave, how calmly we utter the formal prayer for his rest before turning again to the joy of our own lives.

2. The good work which this soul has now to perform in Purgatory is that of paying the last farthing of his debt to divine justice. It is this debt which causes his suffering, for it delays his entrance into heaven, and weighs him down with the sense of shame and horror for his own life. Long would be his stay in the prison but for the permission given to all the children of God to go to his aid. He has the right of appeal to the angels and saints in heaven, and to the brethren on earth. Charity is the distinguishing mark of the true Christian. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."—John xiii. And every form of human distress is open to our loving ministrations. It is within our power to diminish the burden which the soul in prison is compelled to carry, and we are as much bound to do it as to perform any other work of charity. We shall know this power of charity much better in Purgatory than at present, and we shall seek it earnestly as do our dead brethren, crying out, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends." Who will remember us after death, if not

those whom we loved and served? "Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."—Gal. vi. The Church has placed in our hands many means of assisting the souls in Purgatory to pay off the debts of their earthly career. We can have offered the sacrifice of the Mass, give alms to the poor, pledge our good works of every kind for their relief, and ask directly with earnest hearts for their speedy release from their prison. There is no excuse for any indifference to this beautiful work of charity. "Restrain not grace from the dead."—Ecclus. vii.

III.—The Reward.

1. It is easy for all to see the deep hold which belief in Purgatory has on the Catholic mind. The devotion to the work of succoring the dead is second to none in the Church. This month of November is specially dedicated to the remembrance of the dead, the indulgences which the living can earn for the holy souls are simply beyond counting, it is even permitted to us to offer for them every indulgence that may become our own after death, and societies have been established in every corner of the earth for their benefit. There is in existence a religious community which has no other aim than to pay their debts to justice. The great charities founded by the faithful in behalf of the needy and suffering among the living are not more beautiful and powerful than the secret work of helping the holy souls, though great buildings and heavy revenues are not required for this charity. We are not content with professing our belief in a middle state with the lips: but we hasten

to express in acts of faith and hope and charity, the belief that burns within us.

2. We do not wait for our reward until the long day of eternity. A part of it is paid to us in this world. The grief-stricken forget half their sorrows in the delightful labor of still serving those who have passed away. Every prayer that falls from the loving lips, every penny placed in the hands of the needy, every pain relieved in the name of Christ, like the dew at night, falls on the mourning prisoner of Purgatory, increases his hope, diminishes his pain, and thrills him with delight over the faithful love which has not forgotten him on earth. Ah, long will the monthly mass, the unforgotten anniversary, keep his memory green in the hearts of the living! And as they kneel before the Christ of the altar the chasm between them will disappear, because they and their dead look together on the same Christ. In the Catholic life there is no sorrow of despair over the departed, because the dead are too near. The hands which soothed the anguish of their dying reach out as easily across the tomb, and minister to them in their prison. Their union is not broken by death, but rather strengthened; and while nature gives way to its sorrow the golden sun of hope never goes down on that holy grief. In time the tears will cease to fall, and the dead will be remembered with resignation. They are safe at home with the Father, they have paid their last debt to justice, and now their love follows us who have yet to endure the ways of death and of Purgatory. We can speak of them as of those who have gone a little journey, recall their loving ways, and smile at their humors; and always there is pres-

ent to us that final meeting with them in the gates of heaven. Long before that time their hands will be stretched out to us in prison, and all that our love measured out to them in Purgatory will be paid back an hundredfold. Thus is our faith, our hope, our charity increased and made firm and fruitful by the simple doctrine so often derided by the foolish worldly-wise.

3. It seems strange that any Catholic could ever forget the prison and the prisoners; but when they can forget Christ Himself the other ingratitude is easy. It is stranger yet that Catholics, who mourn their dead with bitter grief through long years, can forget the very existence of Purgatory. Such grief has more selfishness than love in it. Flowers, marbles, tears, comfort, are wasted on the poor body and its last resting-place; but never a Mass is offered, or a poor beggar helped, or a penitential act done, for the relief of the living soul. At most a few wretched prayers, too weak to rise above the horizon, acknowledge a dead faith in the prison of the debtors. It is the punishment of these indifferents that most of their relatives and friends are of the same stripe, and that they also shall be left, as they left their dead, to pay their debts unaided. "The hope of the unthankful shall melt away as the winter's ice, and shall run off as unprofitable water."—Wis. xvi.

The Saints.

To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with Me in my throne: as I also have overcome, and am sat down with my Father in his throne.—Apoc. iii. 21.

They are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.—Luke xx. 36.

OUTLINE.

1. Very few have a clear understanding of the nature of a saint.
2. Who is always a more or less faithful copy of Christ.
3. And who ever remains a human being in spite of his biographers.
4. The saints knew and despised themselves with perfect knowledge.
5. They knew men to perfection and loved them with godlike fervor.
6. Beside the saints the pagan philanthropists look little and ordinary.
7. The natural powers and acquirements of the saints might be small, but their knowledge of God was angelic.
8. The Protestant and pagan world begins at this late hour to admire them.
9. Their tremendous influence on the world's history.

I. The True Idea of a Saint.

1. The life-stories of the martyrs appeal to all minds, because they are tragedies, and tragedies are always interesting. But it must be said that in the eyes of Heaven the martyrs' deaths were less notable and meritorious than the last acts of perfect love which stirred their strong hearts. Death is an ordinary fact, which occurs to all men. Perfect love, which makes death acceptable to the martyrs, is rarer than diamonds; but it is the distinguishing mark of all the saints, whether they die at the block, before a pitiful world, or in a monk's obscure cell. A great mind like St. Thomas of Aquin, a humble

farmer like St. Isidore, a commonplace beggar like St. Benedict Labre, are all alike in the one quality of loving God with all the strength of nature and grace; but where ten thousand have heard of the martyrs, only one has heard of the great saints whose lives ended with an ordinary fever. In fact, the English-speaking world either knows nothing of the saints, or misunderstands them. The very idea of a saint is wholly lost to the non-Catholic mind. Kate Field once wrote that Catholics made saints of persons who on principle never took a bath, nor changed their clothes; and Tennyson, in his poem on St. Simeon of the Pillar, makes the man of God a feeble-minded clown. Catholics resident in Protestant countries have misunderstood, and partly forgotten, their saints for two reasons; they would not expose them to Protestant ridicule by frequent mention of them, and left the writing of their lives to pious persons who forgot the saints were human beings, and made them out altogether angelic. Popular Catholic art has rooted the angelic idea in our minds, as one can see by a hasty examination of our popular engraving and statuary. So that, between Protestant prejudice and Catholic blundering, we have all been deprived of a rational acquaintance with the saint.

2. A saint, as Catholics understand him, is a more or less exact copy of Jesus Christ Himself, as far as man can imitate that divine Model. The life of every true Christian is modelled on the life of Christ. When you meet with a spotless soul, laboring in sweetness, meekness, and patience, to know and love and serve God more completely and unselfishly every day, whose meat and drink is to do the will of Heaven,

you have met a saint. He may be a common saint, without any call to enlighten the Church, to illumine its history, honor its altars, console its children in all ages; his vocation may only be to let a small and humble circle feel and see what the perfect love of God is; his lot may be obscurity; nevertheless he is a saint, and of his kind there are thousands in the Church at this moment. From these common saints God selects the historic souls who are to stir the world with their genius, as did St. Thomas; convert nations, like St. Francis Xavier; make wonderful history like Pope Hildebrand, and draw the tears of Christian and unbeliever alike by such a tragedy as St. Agnes'. Between the historic saint and the common saint there is not the slightest difference, except in the gifts that God gives them, and the duties He requires of them. All love and serve God to the fullest measure demanded by the nature and the grace with which He has endowed them. They never lose one iota of their human nature. "Lord," the aged Philip Neri used to say each day of his old age, "watch Philip, that the traitor in him do not shame Thee before night."

3. The marble in the sculptor's hands becomes a statue, not by destroying the marble, but by chiselling off every bit unnecessary to the ideal; so the man comes to be the saint, not by destroying his nature, but by chiselling away its superfluities and giving it the outline of Christ. And the work is not done by angelic hands, or by the trick of the magician, in the twinkling of an eye; it is done by a poor creature of dust like ourselves, urged by the grace of Baptism and the other sacraments to follow Christ, who fixes his eyes on the person of the Saviour, and, with the

sharp chisel and the firm hammer, chips and beats the sanctified block, stroke after stroke, year after year, as Michael Angelo worked, in study, in prayer, in patience, in joy, until to the eyes of men and angels the statue stands forth in luminous perfection, another Christ. And whether you find the statue in the palace of a king, admired by the great, or hidden in a barn known only to the little, it is still a work of genius. Keeping in mind the fact that saints are human beings, of the same stuff as ourselves, and that they arrive at perfection or saintship just as we would set out for that goal, it will be easy to understand the secret forces of a saint's character. The saints are copies of Christ. Their gifts are from Him, and resemble His. His gifts were knowledge and love—overpowering knowledge, and immense love; the saints consequently possess, above all other men, an almost perfect knowledge, an almost perfect love of the three beings with whom every man must deal in this world: themselves, their neighbors, and the incomprehensible God. Knowledge is power; love is power; knowledge and love together are nearly invincible; perfect knowledge and perfect love of God and man are granted only to the saints, are the highest forms of power, and account for the influence, the immortality of fame and glory awarded to the saints even in this world.

II. The Saint's Knowledge and Love.

1. To know and love one's self may seem easy, agreeable acquirements; but in a world whose meanest animals and smallest insects are mysteries to the

wisest, we can be excused from perfect acquaintance with our own nature; in a world where vice is so common and sin so powerful, the best of us can suspect that we love our sins better than we do ourselves. We all know that the wages of sin is death, yet we all sin; we all know that the habit of sin is disastrous to health of body, as well as health of soul, yet we are not frightened from acquiring such a habit. Our knowledge of ourselves is a weak and flimsy knowledge; our love of ourselves is a false love of falser pleasures. The sea is pretty deep and wide, and the heavens are high, but they have been sounded and measured; the height and depth of each human soul has never been measured by man; out of those depths have risen monsters that have scourged whole nations. Who would have believed that this nature of ours, so beautiful in itself, so richly endowed and honored by God, could give birth to Judas, to Nero, to Henry VIII., to the First Napoleon? Yet these and other monsters like them, more or less famous, were once innocent children, and no one, not even themselves, dreamed of the power of evil locked up in their helpless selves. To know one's self, then, is not so easy as it seems. To love one's self with a wise, judicious love, is difficult. When we get to know our good qualities we almost fall down to worship them. Satan, amazed at his own beauty and power, thought his good qualities good enough to make him God. If his knowledge of himself was so poor and deficient, if his love for himself was so foolish, he, an angel of light, what must we think of our self-knowledge and self-love. Now in these two things the saints of God have been proficient. Look-

ing with the light of Heaven into their own natures, they saw in terror the shapes of new and more terrible Neros in those profound depths; and from that knowledge came a tremendous distrust of themselves. They became humble to an extent men could not understand; their humility brought on them the anger of friends and the scorn of their enemies; no place was too small for them, though a tramp might disdain it, and they fled honors as we fly a plague. When they were called to wear the honors of government in the hierarchy or in religious communities, they wept tears more sorrowful than death of their own could draw from them; they knelt at the feet of superiors and begged, as they never would have begged for life, to be left in obscurity. We, in our calm and confident knowledge of human nature, are almost inclined to take such tears and pleadings as hypocritical. We, in our superior knowledge of our own ordinary qualities, feel ourselves capable of any position in the gift of God or man; we would accept with joy all dignities; and where we do not scorn the tears of the frightened saint, we declare our inability to understand him. We love ourselves for the comfort and pleasure we get out of ourselves. We run after the first seats at banquets and spectacles; we shirk labor; we avoid sorrow and pain and weariness; we groan and cry to Heaven if our will and our ease are put to discomfort.

2. The saints loved themselves but for two reasons—that God had made them and given them a work to do. They treated their souls and bodies as dear friends, as servants of the will of God. They studied, rested, ate, drank, to keep the instrument of

God's designs in condition for the work He assigned them. They were not deformed or decrepit in body, or crabbed in soul, as Tennyson would have us believe, but beautiful in appearance, so that all men ran to them, sought to hear them, to touch them, to study their manners, to watch the eyes and the features through which shone "the light that never was on land and sea," the light of Heaven. No mere earthly or mental beauty ever received such homage, conscious or unconscious, as the saints received from men. To know and love our own kind seems natural and easy; and up to a certain point it really cannot be difficult. It is rarely, however, that we get the opportunity to know men as we know ourselves, and our love for them is so mingled with selfishness, so hindered by our own weakness, that with the generality of men, outside of Christian influence, it is almost animal-like. Speaking generally, when we come to acquire a fair knowledge of human nature, we are said to be keen and experienced, which mostly means that hardness of heart is easy to us. When we have acquired a love of men beyond the common, we are called philanthropists—lovers of men. Business men are, as a rule, best equipped with knowledge of their fellow-creatures. This knowledge has almost invariably one result; the sense of mankind has expressed it in a proverb: "Familiarity breeds contempt." Business men despise and distrust the many, and respect the few. Lovers of men, philanthropists, are few at present, and have been fewer, and their good works, noble as they undoubtedly are, worthy of all praise, are very accidental. Knowledge which leads us to despise our kind is not of the lofti-

est, and charity of an accidental sort is not encouraging nor lasting. Even Catholics who know all men to be their brethren in Christ, and feel called upon to love them as brethren, know with what difficulty they bring themselves to understand another's nature, and to speak with necessary politeness to an enemy. Beside this halting knowledge and this cold love place the knowledge and love of the saint in regard to all men. Their knowledge of a man is as wide as heaven; they see at one glance the depths of his nature, his origin from the hand of God, his return to that God, his high and constant position in God's love, his redemption by Christ, his risk of eternal happiness; they see him the parent of innumerable offspring; with all his faults, the founder of empires, though to-day he may be the commonest of laborers; and the result of their knowledge of him, Heaven-born and Heaven-sent knowledge, is a sentiment of the profoundest respect; they know nothing of scorn and distrust concerning him; and though they fear themselves, distrust and humiliate themselves, for man they have only sentiments of love and esteem.

3. Where we respect and confide, it is easy to love, but the love of the saints for their fellows, like their humility, is something mysterious to us all. It has led them to do such wonders that the world calls them crazy enthusiasts; and while we are proud of them, we are also mortified that we cannot explain their enthusiasm in measured language. The envious infidel of our day, when you speak of the love of the saints for men, asks proudly if they have done anything for man which other men, not saints, have

not done for love of man, or gold, or mere adventure; if you speak of the time and money and labor given by the saints in carrying out their ideas, the infidel will show you scores of living men doing as much from different motives, exploring the hidden regions of the earth, or solving scientific problems for the general benefit; if you name St. Francis Xavier and Father Jogues, and other brave souls that lived and died or shed their blood among strange and barbarous peoples for man's sake, they will name you Cook, Speke, Livingston, Stanley, and a thousand others who dared as much for gold, or fame; if you speak of St. Francis, St. Benedict, St. Vincent de Paul, and others who founded great congregations of charity, they will point out to you the innumerable benefit associations of to-day, founded to make money. One would imagine that the love of Christ, as one great New York journal tried to prove, was hardly equal in beneficent results to the love of gold in man. But a stream never rises higher than its source. Bunch explorers for love of fame and money, philanthropists, scientists, and organizers of mutual benefit associations, into one, and you have nothing that is not material; you have not added to the stock of true uplifting love for man one fraction of an ounce. Their benefits to humanity, like the motives which prompted them, are cold and hard, and all their power could not purchase for man one jot of that deep, overpowering love which prompts every charity of the saint, and makes him no longer a man, but a God. He is no mere dispenser of money, no mere builder of hospitals and refuges, but love itself incarnate in man, come to give that which only God can give in

full measure, the loving sympathy of a Christian heart. And so the savage or the half-tamed barbarian sees step upon his soil, no crowned explorer, but a brother and a friend; the orphan, in the cold imitations of home called refuges, meets the tenderness, the sweetness of a mother's love; the dying man in the hospital, the insane patient, the wild criminal, are encompassed by a love of which friends and fellows are alike incapable; and the poor leper, shut out from man and love, more carefully than if the earth swallowed him, feels upon his horrible face the sweet, clean, healthy lips of a Damian, and around his dreadful body the clasp of human arms—a clasp he never thought to feel again.

III. The Saint's Influence.

1. To know God and love Him are the first principles of Christian faith and practice, but we do not need to be told with how little knowledge and how feeble a love of the Creator men can get along; our own personal experience and our own observation have taught us the measure. We know God, yet we do not scruple to offend Him; we say we love Him, and our lives scarcely hint of it. Knowledge of the good makes a man noble of thought and action; love of another makes us resemble the loved one; and just what we know of God, and just how much we love Him can be made plain to ourselves by our own dispositions. The saints could be deficient in earthly learning, but for their knowledge of God Heaven could justly confer upon them its proudest degree; and their love of Jesus made them what He was,

natural and charming in manner, beautiful to the dullest eye, wise in their simplest utterances, innocent as children, severe in judgment of sin, merciful, loving in judgment of man, laborious to the uttermost, with faith like a rock, hope unshakeable, and a devotion scarcely surpassed by angels.

Such are the saints as the Church knows them, and as God honors them. If any men are worthy of human honor for high scientific attainment and love for their fellows, the saints stand first, whether they be famous or obscure by the world's measure; for they are experts in those forms of knowledge which are highest—knowledge of God and man; and their love for man is not only human, it is also divine in its intensity and fruitfulness.

2. Their lives read like romances; their deaths thrill the most sceptical. Yet Catholic literatures of the English-speaking world have done little to bring these wondrous and beautiful lives before the English-speaking peoples. The truth is, we feel ashamed to have our saints working miracles in times which deny to all men the right or the power to work miracles. We seem afraid to maintain before this sneering world that miracles are the unfailing consequence of such knowledge and love of God as the saints possessed. Yet the world is doing what we are afraid to do. It is reviewing and restoring the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, and tearing to pieces the work of Martin Luther. In our very time it awards to Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England and martyr of the Church, that praise which he scorned, and condemns unsparingly John Knox, bigot and firebrand. It has only pity and kind words for Cardinal Fisher, and

the mercy of silent contempt for Cranmer. A thorough Protestant writes the life of St. Francis of Assisi in a spirit that a Catholic might envy, and a hundred others write to condemn the spirit, the doctrines, and the works of Calvin. Protestants would have no historic saints on their calendars, denied that such beings could exist, condemned as fictions, or worse, the saints of the Church; and to-day they are without a practical standard of personal sanctity, and their historic personages, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Henry, Elizabeth, Cranmer, look like historic rogues. These writers feel, in a measure, as we do not, the beauty and force of a holiness which exists nowhere but in the saints, of whom the historic fraction are the public men and women of the Church, and as such entitled to a foremost place in biographical work.

3. They have inspired art, and they are still the models for great souls striving for sanctity. Many a noble canvas pictures their faces and the scenes of their lives; many a statue, sculpture, mosaic, fresco, tapestry, is concerned with them alone; many a stately poem and classic volume gets half its sweetness and power from their names; grand churches and cathedrals rise under their patronage; millions of holy souls look to them for help and inspiration. The memories of them, like a million streams, flow over the fair land of the Church, keeping its flowers in bloom, its air cool and sweet, and its people fresh and vigorous. What a pity that the English-speaking world is still shut out from their influence. We know so little of them that we hardly dare write their histories in the English tongue. That tongue for three hundred years was the slave, chained and calloused,

of English error; a slave taught to revile everything Catholic, to forget that it had ever sung hymns to the Mother of God and the saints of Christendom, until Cardinal Newman struck the chains from its limbs, delivered it from bondage, and showed it once more to praise God and His chosen ones in tones more sublime than ever. All praise to him! We have only to follow where he has led. Locked up in other languages lie the stories and traditions of our best friends in heaven; some day they will be translated for our joy. May the pens that engage in that noble work be inspired to impress upon our minds and hearts what the saints were in truth—not stones, but men; not angels, but human beings; not an unfeeling mob predestined to glory, but sensitive souls, who sweat blood with Christ; and who first and last, on earth and in heaven, have thought, worked, and prayed for us as if we were their children.

Index.

INDEX OF SUBJECTS.

Advent Season, The, 1
All Saints, 311
Angels, The, 303
Ascension of the King, The, 262
Assumption, The, 294
Blessed Trinity, The, 278
Child, The, 246
Christian Family, The, 197
Christmas Day, 44
Corpus Christi, 286
Death, 95
Easter Sunday, 254
Epiphany, The, 61
Everlasting Failure, 121
Faith, 137
Final Account, The, 104
Four Last Things, The, 222
Heaven, 112
Holy Name of Jesus, The, 230
Holy Thursday, 181
Immaculate Conception, The, 36
Knowledge and Love of Christ, The, 146
Lenten Season, The, 86
Married State, The, 238
New Year's Day, 53
Passion of Christ, The, 129
Penance, 173
Pentecost, 270
Prayer, 205
Precursor, The, 9
Priestcraft, 213
Responsibilities of Christians, 27
Sacraments, The, 155
Saints, The, 326
Scribes and the Pharisees, The, 18
Sin, 164
Souls in Purgatory, The, 318
St. Joseph, 77
St. Patrick, 69
What is Wrong with the Men, 189

INDEX FOR SUNDAY GOSPELS.

First of Advent, 1, 104
Second of Advent, 9, 146
Third of Advent, 9, 18
Fourth of Advent, 9, 27
First after Epiphany, 97
Second after Epiphany, 230, 238
Third after Epiphany, 137
Fourth after Epiphany, 205
Fifth after Epiphany, 104, 164
Septuagesima, 173

Sexagesima, 27
Quinquagesima, 86
Second of Lent, 27, 146
Third of Lent, 164
Fourth of Lent, 189
Fifth of Lent, 18
First after Easter 137
Second after Easter, 213
Third after Easter, 77, 112
Fifth after Easter, 205
Second after Pentecost, 189
Third after Pentecost, 173

These sermons were not written with reference to the special gospels, but by a few changes in the text they can be made suitable for the Sunday gospels named above, and for many others accoring to the taste and inclination of the preacher.

INDEX FOR SPECIAL COURSES.

In Advent, ... 1, 9, 18, 27
In Lent, first course, . . . 86, 95, 104, 112, 121, 129
In Lent, second course, . . 137, 146, 155, 164, 173, 181
In Lent, third course, . . . 189, 197, 205, 213, 222, 230
In June, ... 44, 181, 129, 262
In October, ... 36, 286, 294, 303
On Christ, first course, . . . 44, 181, 129, 254, 262
On Christ, second course, . . . 146, 278, 230, 286
On Holy Fear, ... 95, 104, 112, 121, 129, 222
On Sin, ... 95, 104, 112, 173, 164
On the Family, ... 189, 197, 238, 246
On the Life Eternal, ... 112, 302, 310, 318

In this list only the Lenten courses were actually preached as a series. The other courses have a natural connection which will make the work of adapting them to the needs of a series very simple and easy.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Jan. 2006

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 017 286 511 2